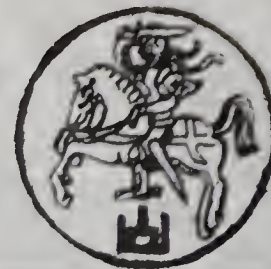




THE

KNIGHT



VOL. IV. No. 5 Issue #23 The LITHUANIAN Numismatic Association February-March 1982 \$2.00

PAPER MONEY TRENDS

By Robert J. Douchis and Frank Passic

It is again time to give the results of our investigation of prices on Lithuanian banknotes. This is the result of price comparisons, auction results, market trends, and other factors. One thing should be noted: Lithuanian banknotes are becoming very scarce on the numismatic market today. We have been amazed how the availability has dried up, even with the more common notes. The prices given are all up, and we suggest any purchase be made soon, before the new Pick book comes out. Remember: you read it FIRST in The Knight!

PICK #	DENOMINATION	VG	VF	UNC
"Temporary" notes dated 9/10/22				
1	1 Centas	10	20	40
2	5 Centai	10	20	40
3	20 Centų	16	32	64
4	50 Centų	20	40	80
5 a & b	1 Litas	50	100	200
6	5 Litai	70	140	280

"Permanent" notes dated 11/16/22

7	1 Centas	12	24	48
8	2 Centų	13	25	50
9	5 Centai	13	25	50
10	10 Centų	15	30	60
11	20 Centų	17	34	68
12	50 Centų	23	45	90
13	1 Litas	35	70	120
14	2 Litų	40	80	160
15	5 Litai, black #	80	160	325
16	5 Litai, red #	55	110	220
17	5 Litai, green #	90	180	350
18	10 Litų	100	200	400
19	50 Litų	185	370	740
20	100 Litų	300	550	1,000

Notes printed in England

21	500 Litų	225	400	800
22	1,000 Litų	300	600	1,200
23	10 Litų 11/24/27	13	26	52
24	50 Litų 3/31/28	30	50	90
25	100 Litų 3/31/28	20	40	80
26	5 Litai 6/24/29	15	30	60
27	20 Litų 7/5/30	18	36	72
28	10 Litų 2/16/38	PAVYZDYS specimen only		
	--	--	--	2,500

An excellent banknote album and individual pages are available from: Lindner Publications, Inc., Box 922, Syracuse, N.Y. 13201. Write for price lists at these mentioned firms, and mention the LNA.

COMMENTS

We feel that nos. 7-10 are overpriced, but that is what they are selling for.

Specimen notes (either perforated or stamped PAVYZDYS) are known to exist in all types of Lithuanian notes; these generally sell at least double the normal UNC price. Example: the P-12 50 centų specimen in the Ted Uhl auction sold for \$225; this is 2 1/2 times the current catalog price. Notes in the series dated 11/16/22 are also known to exist with the specimen overprint in french: "Enchantillon! Valeur Non Valuable!"

The World War II ration coupons (Punktė) issued for "Litauen," sell for around \$45 each; the 10 punktė is scarce, and those with serial numbers sell for slightly higher prices.

A set of the Scheinfeld UNRRA 1946 Camp Money sells for \$45--50. (3 piece set)

In 1980 and 1981, 112 Lithuanian banknotes were offered for sale, representing 20 of the 28 collecting series. Many notes are scarce and others are becoming close to rare. We encourage LNA members to register their purchases with us, so we can continue to keep track in the future. Here are the known dealer listings of Lithuanian notes in the past two years: P-1, 4; P-2, 4; P-3, 2; P-4, 2; P-5, 1; P-6, 0; P-7, 4; P-8, 4; P-9, 4; P-10, 5; P-11, 0; P-12, 5; P-13, 2; P-14, 1; P-15, 1; P-16, 0; P-17, 0; P-18, 0; P-19, 0; P-20, 2; P-21, 2; P-22, 2; P-23, 12; P-24, 15; P-25, 21; P-26, 3 (This is a possible "Sleeper" that bears watching); P-27, 17; P-28, 0.

In our warning about vinyl or soft plastic coin holders, the same holds true for banknotes. Notes should be stored in acetate or mylar holders. Individual 5 x 8 holders are available from: Mrs. Beate Rauch, Box 2138, Terminal Annex, Los Angeles, CA. 90051.

2. One of the important references on Lithuanian finances and money is The Economic Reconstruction of Lithuania After 1918, by Anicetas Simutis, New York: Columbia University Press, 1942. Chapter V (pp. 102-111) is entitled "The Finances of Lithuania," and is often quoted by many when referring to Lithuanian finances and numismatics. We reproduce this chapter here for our members:

Chapter V

THE FINANCE OF LITHUANIA

The financial aspect of Lithuania's reconstruction after 1918 involves a discussion of her currency, her state finance, and her public debt.

CURRENCY

Up to the time of the World War of 1914-18, Russian ruble notes circulated in Lithuania. As early as 1915, when the first German troops entered Lithuania, a decree was proclaimed which made German marks equally acceptable with the Russian rubles. (Exchange rate: 2.16 marks for 1 gold ruble.)¹

On April 17, 1915, by special decree, an institution under the name Darlehnkasse Ost (Loan Bank of the East) was created and made a special department of Ostbank für Handel und Gewerbe. The main function of this bank was to issue *Obost* rubles² and to serve as a state bank in the occupied region. The official exchange rate of the *Obost* rubles issued by the Darlehnkasse Ost was as follows: one *Obost* ruble equaled one Russian ruble or two German (or *Obost*) marks. By a decree of August 6, 1916, the German administration promised to redeem *Obost* rubles with genuine Russian rubles put into circulation by Darlehnkasse Ost. But on March 30, 1917, this promise was retracted and redemption by German marks was promised at the rate of two marks for one ruble.³

¹ *Lietuvos Bankas, First Decade, 1922-1932*, Kaunas, 1932, p. 2.

² One *Obost* ruble equaled two *Obost* marks, one bank note having both inscriptions.

³ *Ibid.* (Continued on page 4)

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EDITOR MOVES

Due to the economic depression in the State of Michigan, The Knight editor and LNA co-founder, Frank Passic, has relocated to Tulsa, Oklahoma. All correspondence with Mr. Passic should now be addressed to: Mr. Frank Passic, 1324B E. 60th St. Apt. 4-G, Tulsa, Oklahoma 74105. (918) 745-0096.

KRAUSE SOVIET UPDATE

The new edition of *Standard Catalog of World Coins* has placed the Baltic states under Russia! I wonder why the editors saw fit to make this political statement legitimizing, numismatically speaking, the rape of Eastern Europe?

Would they, 40 years ago, have rushed into print listing Czechoslovakia, Poland,

Belgium, France, etc. under Hitler's Third Reich?

Now that the SCWC editors have shown their political colors loud and clear, I hope in future we'll not be treated to hypocritical statements that politics has no place in numismatics.

M. J. George
Southfields, N.Y.

ED. NOTE: As explained by the cataloguing department earlier in these pages, the placement of the Baltic states was made on numismatic cataloguing grounds.

The letter on the left appeared in the January 19, 1982 issue of World Coin News. This has been the only letter on this subject that Krause publications has printed since October 13, 1981, when they announced that they were going to "stonewall" it, and the opinions of numerous Baltic collectors were going to be ignored.

Since that time, the numismatic printing firm of Krause publications has received numerous letters [we wouldn't be surprised if the number was in the hundreds] protesting that firm's pro-Soviet cataloging policies. Major Baltic societies have been alerting their memberships via their publications

about the listing of Estonian, Latvian, and Lithuanian coins under "USSR." Notice the WCN editor's response that "numismatic cataloging reasons" were behind the move. In their earlier editorial, they emphasized "political realities" as the reason.

This subtle change in their reasoning is consistent with rumors that are now circulating among the numismatic community. It is alleged that Krause publications might have been sued for copyright violations regarding their cataloging method used in the SCWC, since at least two other world coin catalogs existed previously, authored by well-known numismatists. (SCWC uses Yeoman [Y-] numbers). The cataloging method used in the SCWC was too close to these other previously copyrighted books, it is alleged, and so therefore we now have the "new" so-called "geographic method" of cataloging in the SCWC. Accordingly, therefore, any logical reasoning or pleas by collectors, no matter how many, would be overruled by the lawsuit threat. This editor has personally written Chester Krause to inquire as to whether this rumor is true or not. We will be more than happy to publish his answer in The Knight. Remember: you read it FIRST in The Knight!

1947 "1st Book in the Lithuanian Language"³.

Medal: First Book in the Lithuanian Language

Sculptor: Petras Rimša

Metal content: Bronze

Size: 35 mm. diameter

Date: 1947

After World War II, medalist Petras Rimša (1881-1961) chose to stay in occupied-Lithuania. The Communists gave him a large studio, and he was allowed to continue his artistic work, adapted of course to the new political conditions which now existed in the country. Rimša designed several post-WWII medals; these are unknown in the West. This writer has made an investigation, and has been able to obtain information and photographs of these medals.

OBVERSE. Entitled "First Book in the Lithuanian Language," the design reflects the Communist ideology of the time, yet shows Rimša's determination for artistic freedom. In the center is Lenin speaking on a podium, with a book below. He is raising his right hand, surrounded by gigantic books, with corresponding symbols. Represented (l-R) are law, astronomy, agriculture, medicine, and industry. Noticeably absent, of course, is religion. Containing the Communist hammer and sickle emblem, the podium's legend reads, "KURIAME KULTŪRĄ TAUTINE FORMA SOCIALISTINE TURINU," meaning, "We are Creating our Country According to the Socialist System." A university building appears in the background, with students on each side. At the bottom is the date, "1947," with the signature of Rimša on the left, and "KAUNAS 1947" on the right. The "wise owl" emblem, frequently used by Rimša, appears at the very top.

The obverse inscription is most unusual, considering the Communist occupation, for it reads from the Lithuanian nationalistic anthem! It states, "TEGU SAULĖ LIETUVOS TAMSUMUS PRAŠALINA IR ŠVIESA IR TIESA MUS ŽINGSNIUS TELYDI," meaning, "May the Sun of Lithuania Banish All Darkness, May Light and Truth Guide Our Steps." Apparently Rimša dared to get away with as much as he could.

REVERSE. The design is astonishing, since it depicts the first Lithuanian book: a Protestant catechism by Lutheran priest and author, Martynas Mažvydas! Apparently the Communists permitted Rimša to reproduce it on his medal for historic, not religious content. In the center is shown the title page, entitled "Catechismusa Prasty Szadei." This book was originally printed by the Hans Weinreich press in Königsberg, East Prussia (Lithuanian Minor), in 1547. The appearance of the book was closely associated with the Reformation movement. The author Mažvydas was a well educated man, and a student at the Univ. of Königsberg. He encouraged Lithuanians to read and write in their own language. A small bust of Mažvydas appears at the top of the medal. A Lutheran pastor in Ragainė (Ger. Ragnit), Mažvydas was raised to the rank of archdeacon in 1554. He died in 1563.

In the background are Rimša's landscape trees, with people sitting in front of a fenced-in area. The date 1547 appears on the bottom. The Gothic inscription is taken from the first page of the introduction of the catechism, which has become known as the first Lithuanian poem. The famous opening lines on this medal read, "BRALEI SESERIS IMKIET MANI IR SKAITKIET IR TATAI SKAITIDAMI PERMANIKIET." In modern Lithuanian this reads, "Broliai, seserys, imkit mane ir skaitykit." The meaning is, "Brothers, Sisters, Take Me



and Read." The medal illustrated above is taken from the book, "Petras Rimša Pasakoja," by J. Rimantas, published in Vilnius in 1964. Rimša's original plaster models for this medal are on public exhibit at the now so-called "Stained Glass Museum" (formerly the St. Michael's Church) in Kaunas.

This author knows of no known examples of this medal here in the U.S. In future issues of The Knight, we will be featuring other Rimša post-WWII medals, to inform our membership of them. Remember, you learned it first in The Knight!

Special thanks to Jonas Augustinus, LNA member, for his help with this author's research.

4. After the declaration of independence, February 16, 1918, because of unsettled conditions Lithuania was unable quickly to introduce her own bank notes. The Provisional Government signed with the Darlehnkasse Ost an agreement by which the notes were to remain in circulation until a Lithuanian bank of issue could be organized. The sums in circulation at that time, as estimated by Professor Rimka, are shown in Table 47.

TABLE 47

GERMAN OBOST NOTES IN CIRCULATION
1917-22

YEAR	NOTES IN CIRCULATION (Millions of Obost marks)	VALUE IN LITAS ^a (Millions)
1917	125.75	186.77
1918 (March 31)	165.65	327.30
1918 (Dec. 31)	290.90	363.62
1920 (July)	546.80	138.50
1921 (July)	779.80	101.70
1922 (July)	2,000.00	63.00
1922 (Sept.)	3,500.00	17.00

^a One litas equals 0.150462 grams fine gold.

It may be observed that the number of notes in circulation increased very rapidly while their value in litas decreased. In September, 1922, the total of notes in circulation was more than ten times greater than on December 31, 1918, while at the same time their value in litas was only one twenty-first as great. In January, 1919, the rate of exchange was 8.27 marks to the dollar, while one year later, in February, 1920, it was 98.994 marks, and in the beginning of 1922, 200 marks. On October 1, 1922, the day redemption of the *Obost* marks commenced, one dollar equaled 1,650 marks; on October 2, 1,815 marks. Russian rubles were redeemed on October 1, 1922, at 0.004 litas.⁴

A special law for the establishment of Lietuvos Bankas (the Bank of Lithuania) was passed on August 11, 1922.⁵ The financial basis of the bank is 12,000,000 litas capital stock consisting of 120,000 shares of 100 litas par value each. Although Lietuvos Bankas, before Soviet occupation, was a private enterprise in its organization, it was under government control and the general director was appointed by the president of the republic upon recommendation of the Council of Ministers. The Law of Establishment of the Lietuvos Bankas grants a special concession to permit the issuance of notes for twenty years, which period may be prolonged by law.

With the first issue of litas notes on October 1, 1922, the redemption of the *Obost* marks at the market exchange rate was begun. The Russian rubles at that time were almost worthless, and the value of *Obost* marks was just a fraction of the original value. This caused a great loss to the popula-

⁴ Kazys Sruoga, *Die Wirtschaft der Republik Litauen und ihre Notenemission*, Kaunas, 1930, pp. 15-18.

⁵ Lietuvos Bankas, *First Decade, 1922-1932*, Kaunas, 1932, pp. 10-14; V.Z. Nr. 199, par. 1347.

LOOK AGAIN



No, our printers didn't goof. Pictured above is a 5 centai (P-9) of 11/16/22, printed in reverse with black ink on poor quality, heavy, off-white paper. There is a pin hole at the + on the tab. The back of the note is blank and the paper is unwatermarked.

We always appreciate our LNA members sending in photocopies of unusual items in their collection.

As an explanation, the above item is one of the four major types of specimen categories found with the 11/16/22 notes. This editor has personally seen several 1 centas notes similar to the above. Characteristics in this type include: off-color ink, watermark variances, reverse printing, partial printing, and off-standard paper.

Do YOU have something unusual in your collection? Send us a photo of it: we'll be glad and share it with our fellow LNA members!

LETTERS

Regarding your letter, yes, we have in Toronto a Lithuanian Philatelic & Numismatic Society, 36 members strong. The group is very strong in that field. We hold an exhibition every year to promote collecting Lithuanian stamps & coins. We also have a youth group who take an active part in activities. As for myself, I am the president of our society, and have gotten many awards for my exhibiting Lithuanian stamps. The main reason I exhibit is to show the world that Lithuania was and is still in existence.

As to the question about the Toronto Lithuanian medals, I was the designer and also the sponsor of the project. The technical data is as follows: Bronze, 300 pieces, issue price of \$3; silver, 250 pieces, \$12; gold, 10 pieces, \$185. Medal size, 40 mm., 5 mm. thick.

[LNA members note:] At present one of our members has some extra and would be willing to sell: Bronze for \$10; silver, for \$30. A gold one is for sale, for the best offer.

I personally would like to congratulate you for the job you are doing, and also am joining the LNA. --Paul Barbatavičius, 39 Thornbeck Dr., Scarborough, ONTARIO, Canada M1G 2J7

BANK

tion of Lithuania, wiping out everybody's savings and creating generally chaotic credit conditions. There is no question but that Germany was responsible for the inflation and loss in the value of *Obost* marks and that Lithuania had the right to demand reparations. Negotiations for that purpose were started in March, 1922, in Kaunas. Reparation was sought for the compulsory introduction of *Obost* marks and the use of issuance rights from August, 1916, until November, 1919, when the German army finally withdrew. The loss to Lithuania was estimated at 5,383 million marks, which sum was demanded by the Lithuanian delegation. Due to the fact that the Germans refused to recognize these demands, negotiations were discontinued. They were resumed in Berlin in May, 1923.⁶ These negotiations resulted in a treaty concluded on May 31, 1923, of which the first paragraph says: "Both contracting parties agree not to raise any claims against each other, originating from events of the World War."⁷

After three months of operation of Lietuvos Bankas—that is, on December 31, 1922—there were 30.38 million litas in circulation. The coverage in gold of the notes in circulation accounted for 50 percent and that in gold and foreign exchange for 109.1 percent. The amount of litas in circulation grew, while the coverage in gold decreased somewhat, but it was never less than the one-third prescribed by law. Thus on December 31, 1923, there were 60.07 million litas in circulation; in 1924, 92.98; in 1925, 81.92; in 1926, 86.79; and in 1927, 96.61.⁸

The issue activities of Lietuvos Bankas in later years are indicated by Table 48. At the end of 1938 the notes in circulation amounted to 141.70 million litas, exceeding the previous all-time high of 1930, while in April, 1939, it reached 181.65 millions, a new all-time peak. The coverage in gold

⁶ A. Moravskis, *Lietuvos Finansai, Pinigai, kreditas ir bankai Lietuvoje pries kara ir dabar, II dalis*. (The Finance of Lithuania: Money, Credit and Banking in Lithuania before the War and at Present. Part II), Kaunas, 1925, pp. 33–35.

⁷ Dailide, *op. cit.*, p. 199; *V.Z. Nr. 173*, par. 1197.

⁸ *Lietuvos Bankas Bulletin*, Feb. 19, 1932, p. 18.

TO BE CONTINUED NEXT ISSUE...

WELCOME

We would like to welcome Mr. Barbatavičius and others of the Toronto Lithuanian Philatelic & Numismatic Society to the LNA! We are looking forward to sharing numismatic information with one another. Feel free to write us, as we will be more than happy to answer any questions about Lithuanian numismatics you might have.

WANT-FOR SALE ADS

This is a FREE service to LNA members. Do you have something to sell, trade, or do you have a want list? List it here, where your fellow Lithuanian collectors can help!

We've observed that anything listed for sale here is usually sold within 2 weeks!



Pictured above is the Valstybės Bankas (State Bank), which contained the Lithuanian Finance Ministry prior to the establishment of the Bank of Lithuania in 1922. The Bank of Lithuania was located here from 1922 until it moved into its new headquarters in 1928. This picture was taken from the book, "*Lietuvos Albumas*," published in 1921 by Otto Elsner, in Berlin.

Does anyone have the Petras Rimša medal, "In Honor of Vladas Putvinskis-Futvys?" This editor is working on an article listing all of Rimša's medals and needs a nice clear sharp black and white glossy photograph of the OBVERSE of this medal. It bears the image of the organizer of the Šaulių Sąjunga (Lithuanian National Guard), and the obverse inscription translates, "Thou hast raised the forgotten shield of Kęstutis and presented it to the National Guard of Lithuania." In the background is depicted the ceremony of the presentation of the colors. The reverse bears the double-barred cross & shield emblem of the L.S.S., and the inscription, "IR ŠIRDĮ IR PROTA TEVYNĖS RYTOJUI," meaning, "Both Heart and Mind for the Homeland's Future." If you have this medal or know of someone who does, please contact this editor, as I need a photo of the obverse, bearing the image of Putvis.

Another item needed: I will need to borrow for photographing in the future a Lithuanian banknote: F-15, 1922 5 litai, 11/16/22. This is the first type, which bears black serial numbers at the bottom under the sower, the letter "S" in the left circle, and the serial letter in the right. It doesn't even have to be in great condition, but would prefer FINE or better. If you have such a banknote in your collection, please contact this editor, and send a photocopy of the note. Am trying to locate the best note to photograph for a very special project...

ORDER OF GEDIMINAS

By Vincent W. Alones and Henry Gaidis. Translation of research by Charles Matuzes

In 1928, on the occasion of the 10th anniversary of the founding of the Republic of Lithuania, the Order of Lithuanian Grand Duke Gediminas (Didžiojo Lietuvos Kunigaikščio Gedimino Ordinas), was established for outstanding performance in military, civil, and public life. The order was named after Gediminas (1316-1341), who is credited with expanding Lithuanian territory, and founding the Lithuanian capital city of Vilnius. It was Gediminas who captured the city of Kiev in 1321, and organized the Lithuanians into a central force.

The institution of the new order was necessitated to provide an alternative decoration to the order of the Cross of Vytis, which had up to this time been Lithuania's only decoration. Though the Cross of Vytis was originally designed to honor acts of bravery in combat, international political considerations had forced the awarding of this decoration for other than its original intention.

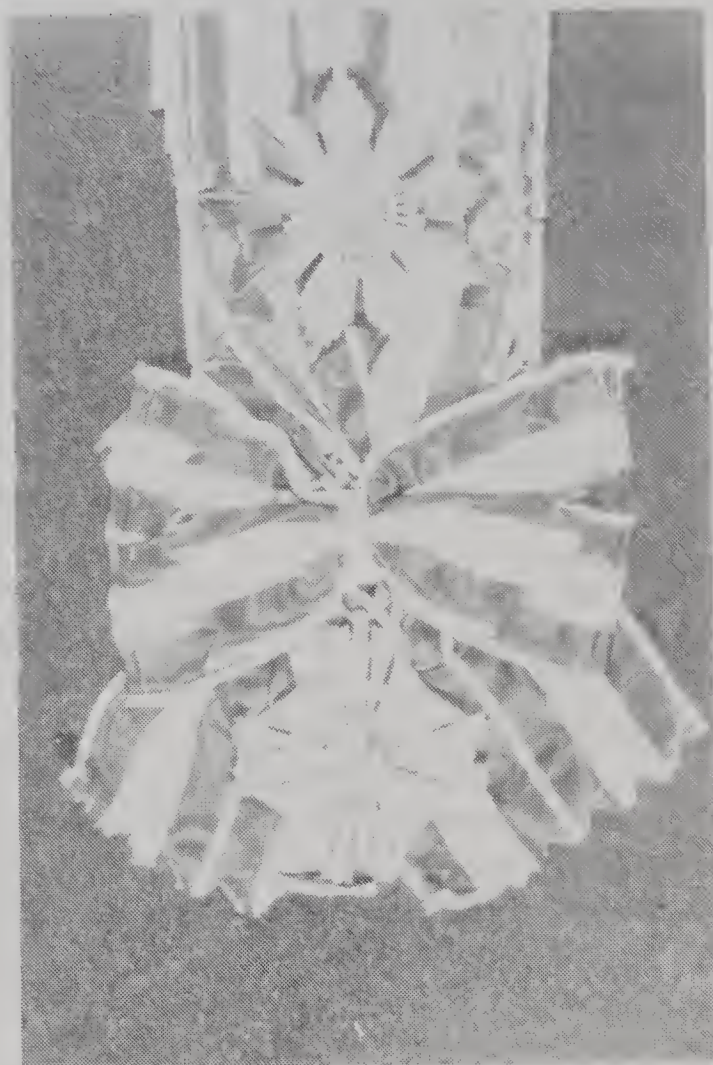
The establishment of the Order of Gediminas provided an order to reward individuals who had made a great contribution to the nation in a non-combat situation. The Order was awarded to individuals both native and foreign who had made a contribution to the common good of mankind, as well as, thenation. The Order was confirmed on individuals not only in government or the military, but the arts, science, medicine, history, etc. As a result of this great diversified awarding of this Order, it is the most prolific of Lithuanian orders and the one most frequently appearing on the collectors market.

As in the case of all Lithuanian government orders, the O of G was established and confirmed under public law, which also regulated its awarding and wear. The Order was recommended for awarding by a member of the Council of Ministers and approved by the President. Upon approval, the recipient of the award had his name published in the Vyriausybės Žinios (Government News).

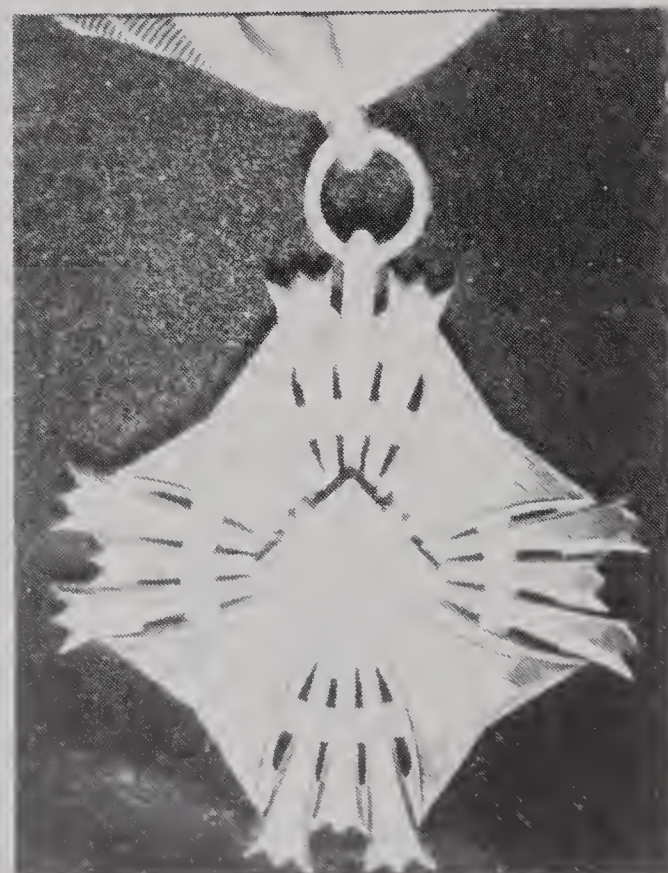
The order was instituted in 5 grades and 3 medals of honor to the Order, according to the recipients civil or military rank or grade at the time of presentation.

The following list sets forth the various military and civil grade ranks to which the particular grade of the Order was awarded: Grand Cordon (1st class), presented according to the desire of the Council of Ministers, with the approval of the President; Grand Officer (2nd class), military: Brigadier and Division general, civilian: XVI, XVII, and XVIII grades; Commander (3rd class), military: Lt. Colonel-Colonel, civilian: XIII, XIV, XV grades; Officer (4th class), military: captain-major, civilian: XI and XII grades; and Chevalier (5th class), military: 2nd--1st lieutenants, civilian: VIII, IX, X grades, or Scholarship. ~~Government~~ employees were eligible: 1st class: same; 2nd class: XII, XIII, XIV, and XV grades; 3rd class: IX, X, and XI grades; 4th class: VII and VIII grades; and 5th class: IV, V, and VI grades.

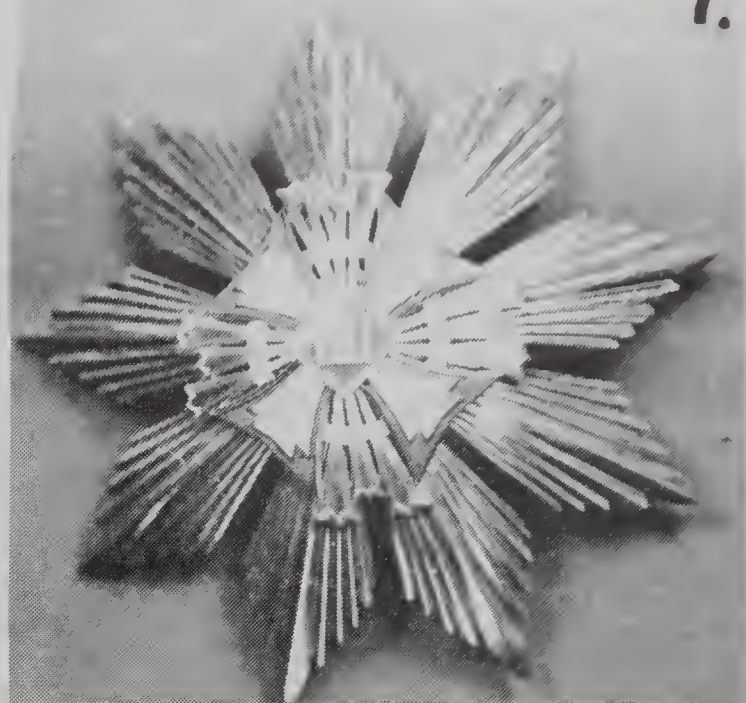
Recipients of the Order were entitled to various rights and preferences under law. 5th class recipients were entitled to a yearly pension of 100 litas', upon reaching the age of 60. A one time subsidy in the event of illness or misfortune, was also another benefit.



Pictured above: Grand Cordon (1st class) Order of Gediminas, with Breast-Star & folded shoulder sash ribbon. Below: 2nd Class (Grand Officer), obverse.



Pictured at right:
2nd class Grand
Officers STAR, pr-
esented to Edward
Earle Darling, by
President Smetona,
on November 29,
1934. Balzekas
Museum collection.



Other benefits included: Children or orphans of recipi-
ents received an appointment to attend schools of higher
education; the right to use the Order on private seals,
visiting cards, and letterheads, and to be referred to by
their award title on all official documents.

The Order was normally presented at a formal gathering
in which a high military or civil official would confer
the order with the appropriate numbered certificate. The
order was given in a recessed velvet and satin lined case
of simulated leather. The outside top of the box was gold
embossed with the Vytis coat of arms, and a Roman numeral,
indicating the grade. The inside of the top satin-lined
material bore the manufacture's name, "Hugenin Freres &
Company., Medailleurs, Le Loche, (Suisse). The Order of
Gediminas holiday was celebrated on February 16 of each
year, Lithuanian independence day.

GRAND CORDON/1st Class:

Sash: worn across the shoul-
der right to left, the
sash is 90 mm. wide.

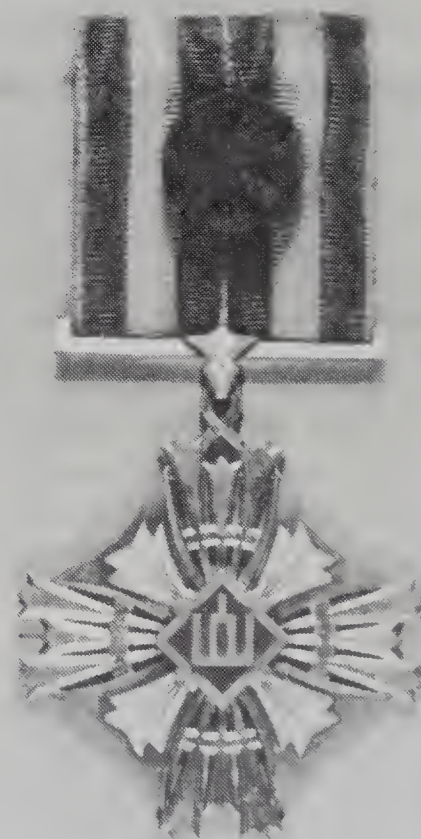
Ribbon: Yellow gold moire
with equal parts of violet
brown on each side, with 3
narrow stripes of yellow
gold moire. Other colors have
been observed like dark br-
own and maroon; age, sunlig-
ht and other exposures can
bring changes in color.

Star: a 33 mm. reduced
copy of the badge is supe-
rimposed on a silver 9 po-
inted star, 77 mm. across
the center, and is worn on
the left side of the bre-
ast.

Badge: Worn on the wide
sash hanging from a bow
on the left hip. The badge
is 62 x 72 mm., a stylized
Maltese iron cross with
white enamel in each arm
of the cross, between each
arm of the cross are 3
golden rays. [NEXT PAGE]



Pictured: (above & below) 3rd class
Commander's class. Balzekas Museum
Collection.



Above: 4th class Order
with rosette. H.L. Gaidis
collection.

8. The center medallion is a silver rimmed, red enameled diamond with the crest of Gediminas, the Columns of Gediminas. The pillars are formed by 7 lines representing the ancient gates of Vilnius. This design has been used on Lithuanian seals and coins since before the 15th century. There is no wording or inscription on the badge other than the date on the reverse side.

GRAND OFFICER, 2nd Class. The order is worn around the neck, small than the 1st class, 64 x 68 mm. The star is worn on the left chest, which is the same as the 1st class. The ribbon is 38 mm. wide, yellow gold moire with 2 stripes of violet brown on each edge. The only change is that the center medallion is rimmed in gold rather than silver as in the 1st class.

COMMANDER, 3rd class. The order is worn around the neck, the ribbon is the same except a little narrower, 33 mm. The badge is the same, except it is smaller: 48 x 56 mm. One big change is the reverse is duplicated as the obverse with white and red enamel and golden rays; the red diamond has silver numerals in the date.

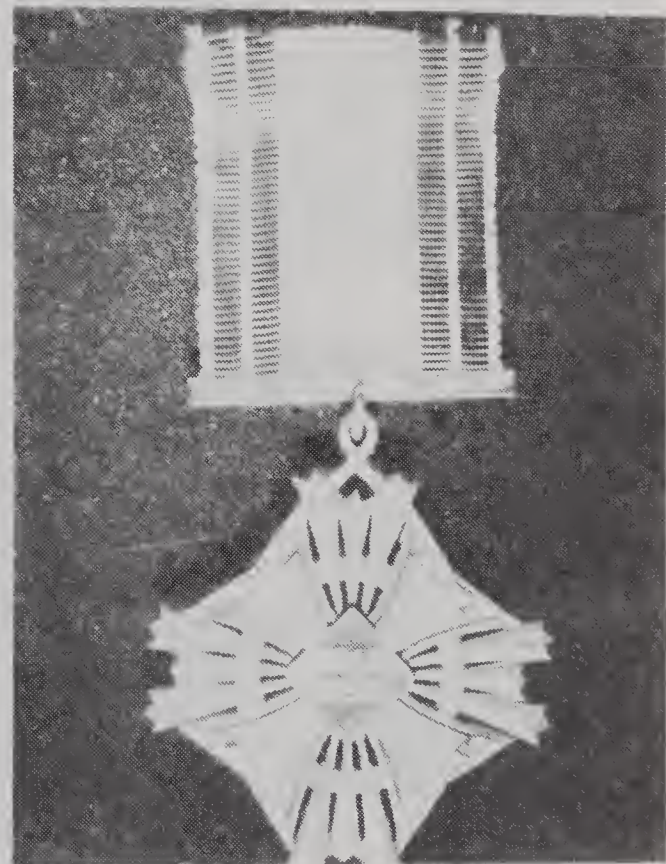
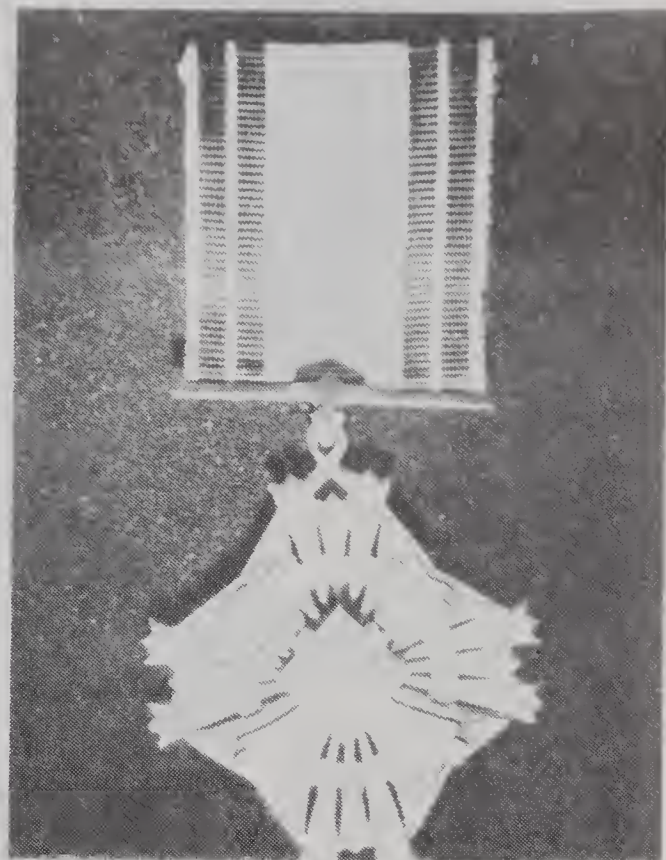
OFFICER, 4th class. This class is worn on the left breast, with the ribbon 1 mm. narrower. A rosette made of the same material is on the ribbon. The badge measures 43 x 49 mm. The badge is attached to a silver bar suspended with a unique device on the center of the bar, making the ribbon hang square and full.

KNIGHT/CHEVALIER, 5th class. The ribbon and badge is the very same as the officer's 4th class, except there is no rosette on the ribbon.

In 1930, the Order of Gediminas was superceeded in seniority along with the Cross of Vytis, with the establishment of the Order of Vytautas the Great. Though delegated to a 3rd place position, the Order still retained great respect. This order was widely used in international relations and was conferred on numerous foreign heads of state who had assisted Lithuania in establishing and preserving and preserving its independence.

NEXT ISSUE OF THE KNIGHT: The Order of Gediminas MEDALS.

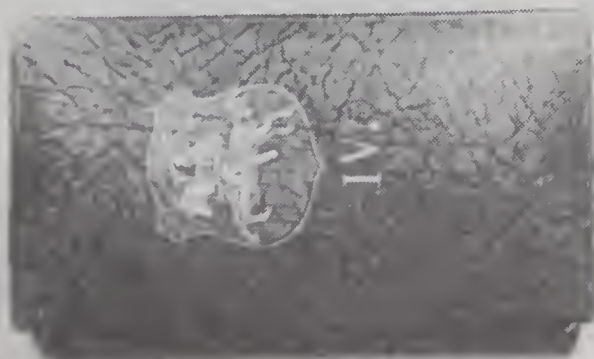
Pictured on right: 5th class Chevalier. H.L. Gaidis collec.



NO C.I.C.F.

Due to the recent move to Oklahoma by The Knight editor, Frank Passic, and the closeness of the Chicago International Coin Fair, we are unable to hold our annual LNA meeting there this year. We hope to schedule some sort of LNA meeting in the future. Where would YOU like to have a meeting? When? At what numismatic coin show? If you would be willing to organize an LNA meeting, let us know. We always have had a great time together meeting one another and sharing our knowledge.

Pictured on left: 4th class Order of Gediminas box. H.L. Gaidis Collection.



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that for a year and a small fraction, there could have reached the pocket of the mint's lessee, about a 1/2 million grašiai, a clear profit. But we cannot forget further growth of production, which grew in proportion, and the profit (exclusive of any possible conscientious "saving" of silver, even if one reduced the silver content only a little bit in the alloy)--this matter was undoubtedly noted during assay time of the half-grašiai.

Alongside of Jezofovičius, another well-known person was active in the Vilnius coin mint of that time: Ulrich Hozijus of Cracow. In his document dated 1514, Sigismund called him "Magister monetarius Magni Ducatus Lituaniae,"¹⁴, that is the Chief Minter. It seems he was at the same time technical head of the mint, since he also prepared the described accounting. Enjoying the confidence of the ruler, Hozijus also prospered in Lithuania and grew. Among other things, he built the first bridge across the Neris River with his own funds, receiving for that the right to charge toll from passengers. That toll brought Hozijus so much income that not only were the costs of the construction quickly returned, but substantial capital for other projects of Hozijus began to accumulate (he built a huge mill for the Grand Duke at Vilnius, and the hospital of the Blessed Trinity). He died in 1535 a wealthy man and left three sons "to serve the state faithfully," of whom Stanislaus reached the rank of cardinal. Another son John, remained with the mint and for some time played a responsible part there.

Regretfully, detailed information about the mint itself did not survive. We still do not know the exact organization, nor all methods and procedures for the preparation of Lithuania's monies. Finally, we have not been able to place even the exact location of the mint, but can only assume that its machines rumbled within the region of the castle near the capital's manor and probably within the manor itself.

Until 1529, Sigismundus the Elder was content to strike half-grašiai only, and truly large amounts of them issued from the mint for those days. For example, in the year 1514 alone, as surviving bills show, about 10 million coins were struck. If in some years a lesser number fell from the hammers, there could also have been years of greater productivity. This we can estimate, from the changes in used dies as seen in recovered coins. Their students have counted for 1508, 2; for 1512, 23; for 1513, 26; 1518, 30; 1521, 33; while in the last year of Jezofovičius' "guardianship"

¹⁴Mennica Wilenska, page 31.

in the year of 1519, as many as 47 changes have been observed.

In 1529, the sounds of coin hammers at the mint ceased, all work stopped. The same old story: the Poles continually urged Sigismundus without ceasing to unify the coinage of both states once and for all, as had been decided at the Petrokov Congress under Alexander. It was one of the most complicated social problems in the moulding of the Polish-Lithuanian state. To debase Lithuanian money so well established in the country was inconceivable---who among the influential boyars or financiers would have agreed to do this? While raising the silver content in Polish coins was unfeasible because of that country's circumstances, and Poles, accustomed to debase their coins, would not even dream of it. Basically, they sought an arbitrary "unification" of the coins of both countries, so that our denars and theirs, as well as the half-grašiai would have the same purchasing power both here and there...Shooting at this queer target, in their Congress of 1515, the Poles raised such an outcry that the King had to compromise to some degree. Sigismundus issued a proclamation requiring parity between Lithuanian and Polish half-grašiai. However, this was in effect only in Poland. Apparently, it was felt that if such parity should be accepted there, it would be easy to apply the same law to Lithuania. But not so! In practice it was soon found that this was a very dangerous field on which to play. Once more the perennial rule clearly showed that good and bad money will not live together in peace. The inferior coins will quickly push out of circulation the better ones (Gresham's Law), and out of this, only a small group of really clever operators will profit. That is what happened in Poland---whoever understood this law hunted the better Lithuanian half-grašiai, and they failed to return them to circulation.

With the failure of this attempt, the Poles' anxiety continued to boil. It is easy to assume that at the bottom of attempts and projects of all types toward a "monetary union", there remained the basic political design: to mould together in one state as quickly and as firmly by any means both countries, as promised and begun by the unforgettable Jogaila. It was difficult for Sigismund to be obstinate or to decypher all the Poles political ends, since he was a grandson of Jogaila, and needless to say, never dreamed of the separation of Lithuania from Poland in any way. On the other hand, a substantial part of Lithuanian boyars continued in the firm opinion that Lithuania must remain a separate state. Sigismundus, continually surrounded by Poles, bent to their will. Finally, he began quietly to prepare a stringent monetary reform, which would satisfy the Poles.

He took the first step in 1529, closing the Vilnius coin mint. Under suspicion of failure to balance, the Cracow mint was closed down that same year. Sigismund tarried in Vilnius for a goodly while. Here he met the leasee of the Torn Coin Mint, Decius, with whom he ostensibly conducted negotiations concerning the joint coin production of Poland and Prussia (which in 1525 was formally joined as a third party to Poland-Lithuania), but most probably he did not overlook including Lithuania's coins in that plan.

But Lithuania's boyars this time circumvented the Poles. In what way they managed, to withstand such tremendous pressure, it matters not, but the result in 1535 was that the Vilnius mint reopened and it poured out Sigismundus' grašis coins, and these were not of the Polish monetary standard, but were adjusted to Lithuanian half-Grašiai then in circulation. In this matter, Lithuania's interests were probably inadvertently supported by the 1534-37 war with Moscow which, breaking out suddenly, required more funds, and left no time for any extra reforms.

* * *

The Lithuanian Grand Duchy long had needed the 1 Grašis denomination coin. When all economic operations were conducted in grašiai and their multiple, thirty, the lack of the very basic unit coin in circulation complicated these operations and aggravated them. The new coin was ushered into existence by a statute of Sigismundus, proclaimed throughout all Lithuanian territory, that no one would dare reject the grašis and that it be valued everywhere at two half-grašiai or 10 denars (small change) equally.

Since the grašis weighed about 2.570 gr. and contained about 0.960 of silver, it did equal 2 half-grašiai even without a statute. However the denars required support from the ruler, since their metrological data, adding 10 units, failed to reach the real value of the grašis; Further, the gross weight also was misleading. One of them weighed about 0.345 gr. 10 weighed about 3.450 gr., so that it was about a gram heavier than the grašis, but in the denar there was about 0.110 less of the pure precious metal (silver) than is mixed in the full grašis. From the time of Alexander, five denars were reckoned into the half-grašis, and 10 of them had to be reckoned into the new grašis.

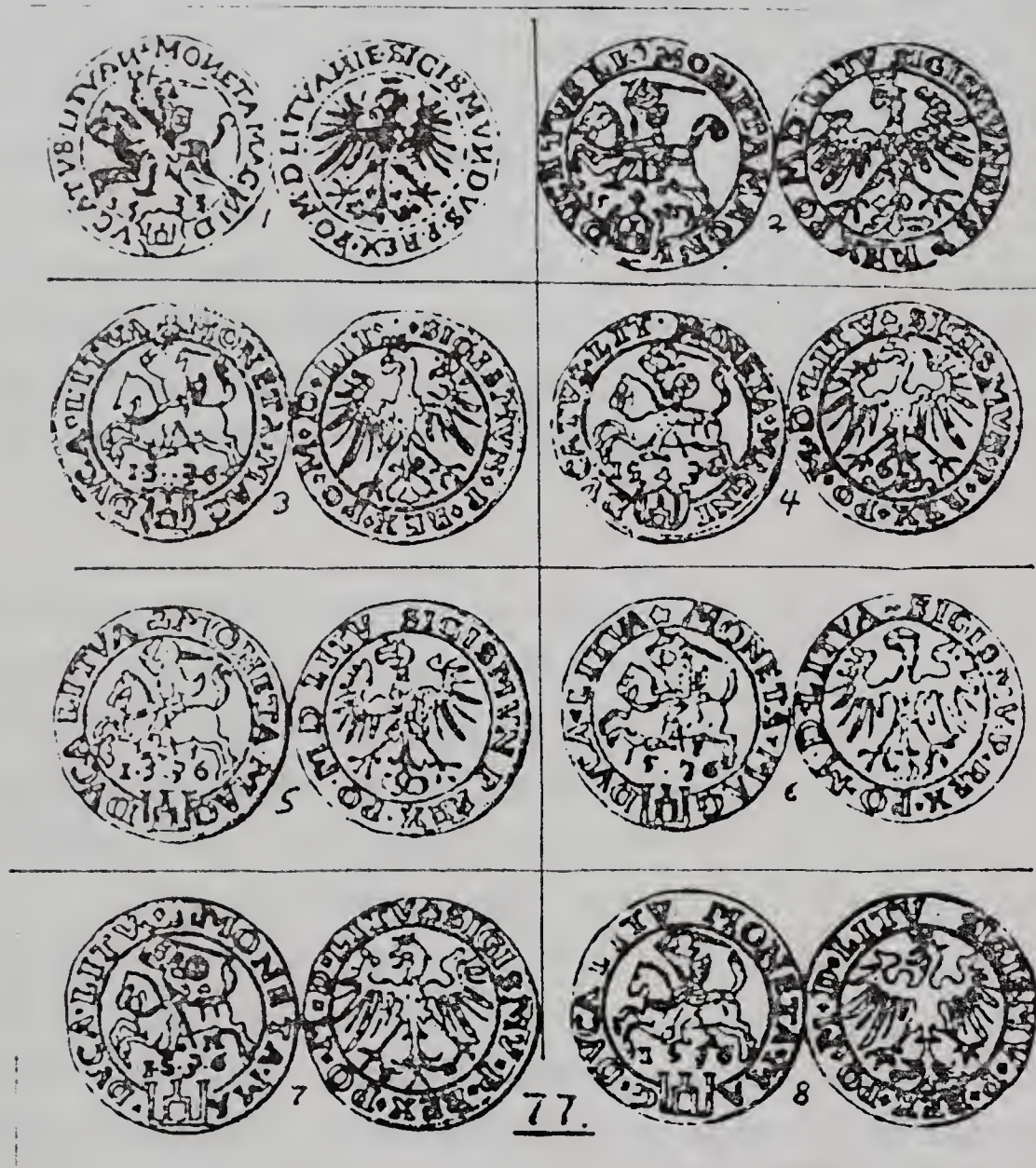


Figure 77. The 1 Grašis coins of Sigismundus the Elder.

The grašis introduced by Sigismundus the Elder remained the basic coin of the Lithuanian Grand Duchy until the end of Lithuania's historical coins. True, each succeeding ruler changed its appearance, lessened its weight by degrees and its

silver content (a general malady of European coins in those days). However, it was born a grašis and it remained a grašis. But that coin was never known as a "skatikas," as one or to "numismatists" of these days, probably, dreamt.¹⁵

As we see in the illustration, the obverse side of the grašis is dominated by the Knight, and below it appears the year of striking, while round about is contained the Latin inscription, "MONETA MAGNI DUCATUS LITUANIAE" meaning, "A coin of the Grand Duchy of Lithuania." Below the inscription is divided by the Columns of Gediminas. The words of the inscription may be complete, or they may be abbreviated in many ways. On the reverse as much room is taken by the Polish eagle and the inscription, "SIGISMUNDUS PRIMUS REX POLONIAE MAGNUS DUX LITHANIAE" which means, "Sigismundus the First, King of Poland, and Grand Duke of Lithuania (the words are likewise variously abbreviated). The letters and everything else clearly recalls the Renaissance influence. This is the first time on Lithuanian coins that a shield is shown attached to the Knight with a clearly visible doubled cross.

The subject grašiai distinguish themselves by a special abundance of all types of signs and brands. Those separations make up a goodly list: periods, wheels, gussets, stars, crosses, leaf, 3-leaves, roses, a crown, etc. It is possible that these signs had some significance, but what--we do not yet know, and probably never will know. Besides these signs, students are confused by a series of changes noted on the grašiai in the capital letters A, F, K, M, and others, placed at the Knight's horses' abdomen, nearer the hind legs. Some of the earlier numismatists held these letters to be series signs of the grašis (initials of the month of issue), but even this opinion has not been substantiated.

On the half-grašiai of both Alexander and Sigismundus, the rulers names were inscribed on the Knight's side. That was logical, correct and natural. On the grašis of Sigismundus we find a "subversion." here the ruler placed his name and titles round about the Polish emblem. This was a courtesy of sorts to the Poles, but on a coin of the Grand Duchy of Lithuania, such courtesy was far and away the wrong place!¹⁶

¹⁵More on the "skatika," see pages 148-149.

¹⁶With complete numismatic conviction, we here tear apart the "dogma" raised by elder students (Poles) that the coin's obverse is that side upon which is struck the issuer's name. The Polish emblem cannot stand in the first place upon a Lithuanian coin! So we hold the obverse of Sigismund's grašiai (and all other coins of the Grand Duchy) and will continue to hold that side upon which is pictured the Knight [Vytis] and inscribed with the motto "MONETA MAGNI DUCATUS LITUANIAE." That which distinguishes and designates the coin, which is most characteristic of it, should be its obverse side. Only the ruler's portrait would decree otherwise (and, of course, the monogram, if there is no foreign design in the most important place on the coin, for example, see page 270, Figure 82, and page 267, Figure 80).

There could not have been too many grašiai struck, since they were struck for only two years (1535-36) and the Vilnius mint again closed. Who was the head of the mint at this time---we know not. So far as is known, the ranking mint master was as previously known, Hozius' son John, while his associate, as shown by the threeleaf found on these grašiai, was the holder of that emblem, Matthew Shiling, who came to Vilnius from Torneau mint in 1535.

Other than the half-grašiai and grašiai, Sigismundus the Elder did not issue any other coins in Lithuania. It seems that the constant charges of the Poles about the "autonomy" of Lithuanian money became disgusting to the old man, and having issued the grašis, he determined to wash his hands of the mess. The Vilnius mint remained idle for a decade of years. Sigismundus Augustus revived it. It is true that the coins struck by Alexander and Sigismundus the Elder probably sufficed if the latter ruler of Lithuania in the period 1527-36 could exchange an entire series of natural privileges (for his officials and himself) into silver coins, as historical sources of that time indicate (for the Grand Duke alone, and only from his 18 provinces in Samogitia), he collected about 4,000 of 30-units of grašiai each year.

4. COINS OF SIGISMUND AUGUSTUS [Sigismundus II; Žygimantas Augustas
1520-1572; Grand Duke of Lithuania: 1544-72; King of Poland 1548-72]

At the end of his life, Sigismundus the Old, and especially his Italian-born wife Bona Sforza, were deeply concerned and moved to insure for their son, Sigismund Augustus, the throne of the Lithuanian Grand Duchy. As a result, in 1529, the lords and boyars elected the 9-year old prince as Lithuanian Grand Duke. Fearful that Lithuania would once more attempt to separate itself from Poland, after a year the Poles elected him their king. So, while Sigismundus the Old was still alive it became clear who was to become the ruler of the two joined states.

Sigismund Augustus was the last separately elected ruler of Lithuania, and the last descendant of Gediminas, to be king of Poland. He grew and was reared among foreigners and their traditions. In the luxurious palace at Cracow, he became accustomed to pleasures, prodigality and extravagances. He was taught by Italian and other western teachers. He learned to converse in several foreign languages. But the most important requirements---the stern principles of life and a firm manly character---he did not acquire from this school. Effeminate, vacillating, he grew up very prodigal, and later, he ruled that way.

During the protracted reign of Sigismundus the Elder (he died in 1548) Lithuanians saw their ailing ruler in Vilnius less and less. It seemed to them that the old man, spending almost all his time in Cracow among the nobles there, leaned more than was fitting to Polish influence, and was closing the gap between the two countries beyond the bounds of tradition. There arose among the magnates of Vilnius demands to define more clearly the separation between the two states. In 1543, the opinion became fixed in high quarters of Vilnius to transfer the sovereignty of Lithuania to Grand Duke Sigismund Augustus, now 23 years of age, and to leave to his father the ex officio title to precedence. This idea seemed to please all Lithuanians, for who was it that did not still dream of a permanent ruler's manor in Vilnius, as it was in Gediminas, Algirdas, and especially Vytautas' time?!

And so it was. In 1544 Sigismund Augustus took up residence in Lithuania's capital, and became to govern just about all aspects of the country. His father

retained only foreign affairs and the treasury, from which he assigned a fixed annual sum for his son's needs, about 18,000 kapas (three score grašiai) , amounting to 1,080,000 Lithuanian grašiai. That was a substantial figure, but Sigismund Augustus could go through even more...

As it was earlier, so it continued with him at Vilnius: Sigismund Augustus was not interested in Lithuania's concerns, and gave them but little thought. He associated mostly with Poles, and had contracted foreign habits. He established for himself a luxurious manor in Vilnius, and decorated it with all types of expensive art. Money flowed to him in large waves, nearly all for his personal pleasures.¹⁷ So, barely having got his feet on the ground in Vilnius, he avidly sought other income which would not be limited as was his father's fund. And what was it that first came into the young prince's head, if not a legal money factory! The coin mint had been inoperative from the year 1536

¹⁷ Having barely begun to act as "viceroy," S.A. expended each week about 30,000 grašiai , overexpending quite seriously the funds set aside for his needs by his father. Every week there was a large beef slaughtered for his kitchen, 18 cows for the courtyard. With his quests, he emptied 30 barrels of beer and the same of mead; Multitudes of leeks, celery, cabbage, turnips, salt, hefbs, wine. He fed his horses 400 pecks of oats (food and feed must be carted by peasants from a distance of 30-50 miles, according to Historical Sources I, 124) . And after his father's death, he stretched his yearly income from the Grand Duchy to 15,000,000 grašiai by 1560, and of course, lived in like luxury. He kept 2,000 horses in Vilnius (exclusive of stallions and mares). His 20 suits of armour were known far and wide for their elegance. Many of his fur coats cost in excess of 80,000 gold escudos. He had an exceeding love of precious things, of which he had amassed 16 large cases, worth about 600,000 gold escudos. In his and his wife's storehouses there were inventories up to 15,000 pounds of gilded silver pieces. There were clocks as large as a man, a "world" with all the heavenly bodies, bowls and vessels ornamented with all creatures of the land and sea, many gold and silver goblets. Of course, there was an organ and all known types of musical instruments, lustrous with precious metals. He was proud of his 30 saddles and harnesses for horses, of such value that one could not find more valuable elsewhere! The Pope's Nuncio, Bishop Bongiovani, whose notes we here use, finally wrote: "I was shown the dress of 20 pages with golden chains, of which each cost 800 Hungarian ducats, and much rare and priceless items, to record which would take too much time wasted..." ("Relacye nuncyuszow apostolskich i innych osob w Polace od roku 1548 to 1630," t. I, Berlin-Poznan, 1864, Hist. Sources, I, 128).

(there were only a few medals prepared there). And there was need enough for money in the expanding economy of the country. Certainly, the boyars would only welcome new coins of their own, so in this matter, Sigismund Augustus found no opposition. Why not begin?

We do not know how and why Sigismundus the Elder's treasury supervision in Lithuania fell apart so quickly (most likely Bona, the factual head of the Cracow palace, applied herself for the benefit of her pampered son), but in 1545, in a manorhouse purchased by Sigismund Augustus II on the German Square, a new Vilnius mint began to rumble. It is characteristic that permission was even given to import silver from Cracow into Vilnius, though a strict prohibition still obtained in Poland against such export. Not only that, for a more speedy start of mint operations, and entire staff of specialists from Cracow were transferred and commissioned to work there, since the employees originally engaged at the Vilnius mint had in large measure left town.

This time, the mint was reorganized basically as a governmental administration. The Grand Duke himself supervised it very carefully, but ordinarily, the country's Treasurer followed it closely. As we can determine from the available fractionalized records, the Sigismundus Augustus II mint in Vilnius was transformed into a strange closed corporation, operating its own "home economy." On its list of personnel, other than officials and master engravers, there was a farm servant, a cook, a blacksmith, a stoker and several odd-job "peasants." In 1545, John Liutomirskis became head of the mint, and remained in that position for about 10 years.

From the available documents it has been established that the first shipment of coin metal was melted at the new mint on October 14, 1545, so that date must be considered the beginning of this new project. From that date, the Vilnius mint operated through 25 long years and struck the longest series of coins of various denominations and types, of all time. No other ruler of Lithuania could equal Sigismund Augustus II in that regard. During his reign the one mint did not always suffice. In addition to Vilnius, his silver half-grašiai (and grašis) were struck in Tikocine (which used to exist between Gardinas and Lomza, in the province bordering Poland). For the purpose of striking gold coins, Sigismund Augustus II had prepared another mint, operating separately from the well-known silver mint. However, the basis for his ready money was the establishment producing silver coin. Technically, there could be no criticism of the arrangements for those times. For the initial plan alone, there were purchased in Cracow all types of machinery costing 63,000 grašiai. In addition, there were requisitioned necessary tools from the older mint. And judging from the concurrent improvements of Sigismund Augustus' coins, much of its equipment must have been purchased in far away corners

of Europe, where this sphere of activity had developed earlier and more had been accomplished in it.

The activity of Sigismund Augustus' coins production which was developed in this way, was broken off soon after the Union of Lublin. (The last head of the Vilnius mint was the Royal Secretary, V. Pšetockis). Since in the preparatory congresses for the Union both parties had finally decided on unifying the coins of Lithuania and Poland, there remained no place for Lithuanian coins, which were better than Polish. However, having supported and finalized the political union, Sigismund Augustus II still did not ordain the "unification" of these coins, either before or after the passage of the Act. And so he died in 1572, without throwing the bone to Poles which they sought so long. Naturally, this was not done from a great love of Lithuania, but for greed of money and love of himself...

* * *

The worst problem facing the Vilnius mint was its poor administrative organization. The country's Treasurer and the leading officials were given freedom to act as they wished, as it seemed to them to be useful and profitable. In such an atmosphere, all kinds of temptations present themselves. The net proceeds from the mint were so relatively poor that they indicate those close to its rudder most assuredly did not forget themselves. So, despite the abundance of silver purchased, and the restriking of about 3.5 million so-called Svidnits (Louis of Hungary) coins into Lithuanian currency, the mint's profit was insufficient by far. If the remaining accounts are complete, then from its opening in 1555 there was turned over to the ruler's treasury a sum of about 213.5 thousand grašiai, which is in truth a "miserly" return. A properly administered mint should have supplied so much more over a period of ten years. For instance, Sigismundus the Elder was much more successful in this respect. Though there were no saints working in his mint, the results were substantially higher.

After 10 years, Sigismund Augustus reorganized his mint. It was leased out to a group of Jews, with a certain Felix (probably a converted Jew) heading this group. On May 1, 1555, the leasees began to produce coins for the Grand Duchy. However, it soon became clear that even the Jews would not flood the ruler with money. Though their active supervision had been assigned to a high official of the Grand Duke (among them his courtier Gabriel Tarla) the leasees found ways of circumventing that "high" supervision. They leased the mint until 1562, but did not like to render

an accounting, and left none! It is also unclear how much silver they utilized, purchasing it most often not from official bankers but wherever it could be found, most often--from speculators of their own choosing. Seeking their own beneficial ends, the leasees struck mostly small coins (denars, half-grašiai coins). Who will ever notice a shortage of silver in such small coins...?

Felix began to buy up larger silver coins in Poland and Prussia for those denars and half-grašiai, profiting in the silver content. Restriking them into Lithuanian small change, he again profited. The denars and half-grašiai of Sigismundus Augustus, compared to the earlier issues, were undoubtedly inferior. But slowly, and surely, those conspiracies of the Jews finally came to light. The first to recognize the consciously thinned out Lithuanian coins, which by tradition were highly prized in Poland, Prussia and elsewhere, were the Prussians. On May 2, 1561, Prince Albrecht sent an admonishing letter in this matter to Sigismund Augustus, to the Governor of Vilnius, and of course, to the responsible officials of Prussia. That was the final and fatal blow to the mint leasees, who had already heard complaints in Lithuania itself, that the small coins were really worsening. Beyond that, too many had already flooded the country.

Sigismund Augustus had to do something, and he did: in 1562, he took the mint away from its leasees. Let us say he nationalized it, and appointed G. Tarla its administrator, who was now Queen Katherine's marshal of the manor. The newly reorganized Vilnius mint by degrees began to strike larger coins. Additions to Felix's intensively ground out grašiai and the barely begun 3-grašiai and 6-grašiai coins were made. A 2-grašiai, 4-grašiai, half taler and taler or a 30 grašiai piece appeared. We will analyze all of Sigismund Augustus' Lithuanian coins separately, arraying them in a file from the smallest to the greatest.

- - - - -

The Half-Denar (1/2 Denar, or OBOL)

During the first three-year period there were struck over a million of the very smallest coins of the Grand Duchy at the Vilnius mint, of which none had previously been seen. They appeared at the same time as the denars, and of the same weight and size, so that they were considered to be denars by our early students of

numismatics. However, their silver content was really $1/2$ lower than the denars, so they were not denars and are not. The old accounts deceived our numismatists, in which these coins were called "small denars." In practice however, two of them equalled 1 denar. Money specialists termed them "obols" (from the ancient Greek "obolos"¹⁸). Between October 14, 1545 and May 29, 1546, the mint produced 734 threescore, 20 grašiai and 2 denars worth, or 881,204 single coins. We find these figures in surviving documents. But that was just the start. Bearing in mind that these coins were struck after May 29, 1546, and even into the year 1547, while the mint's production constantly grew, we may confidently speculate of about 2 to 3 million.

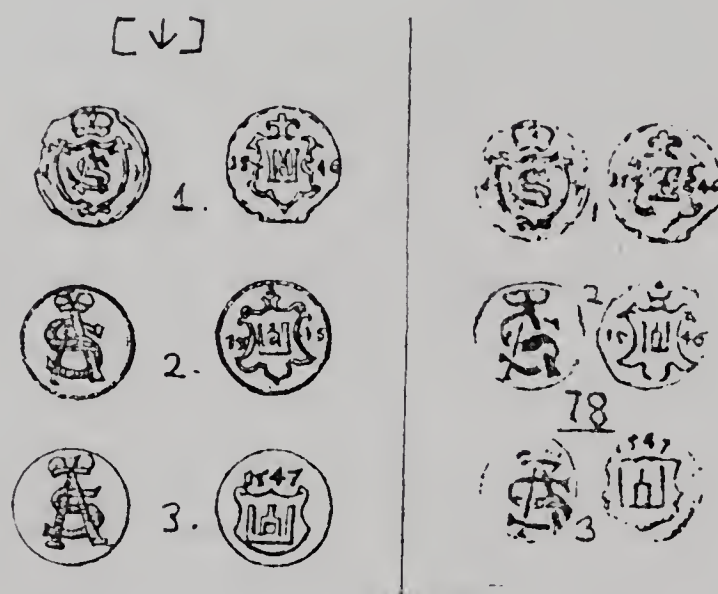


Figure 78. Sigismund Augustus' half-grašiai (Obolai)

On the obverse the existing monogram with a small crown is a version in Latin initials of Sigismund Augustus' name, SIGISMUNDUS AUGUSTUS. These same and similar monograms we will observe on Lithuanian coins later.

¹⁸The Greek "obolos" at one time meant $1/6$ of a silver drachma, but there were also copper "obolos." In Byzantium, the smallest coin was designated by that name. So from there came the "classic terminology" of the Lithuanian half-denar, the smallest of the country's coins. In the 16th century, the "obolas" was known in Europe (for example, the German half-pfennig was so termed.).

On the reverse, upon a greatly embellished shield we find the Columns of Gediminas (also in differing versions) and at their sides (or elsewhere) the date of striking. One half-denar weighed on the average about 0.317 gr., and of silver content we find mixed in almost 0.035 gr., so that it was a trifle lighter than Alexander's denar, while its real value in metal was less than half.

The question arises, what was the necessity for such a small coin at all? That is a difficult question to answer. For the Lithuanian economy of that time it would seem that even a denar would have sufficed to transact minor deals. On the other hand, no expert in coin production could have foretold that the striking of such small coins by the mint would be justified. The only reason for the appearance of the half denar that could be advanced would be to combat the unfortunate "Svidnicas," half-grosches of Louis of Hungary. They were struck in Svidnica during the period 1517-1528 and are very similar to their Polish counterparts. After being outlawed in Poland and Prussia, millions of these half-grosches found a haven in Lithuania. Their real value was somewhat smaller than the Polish half-grosches, but as for Lithuanian money, they barely reached 3.5 of a denar. Not having noticed them in time, to ban their use in Lithuania was then too late. On the other hand, without having a half-denar coin of their own, the public could not honestly account for these half-grosches. A half-denar difference would be felt, and no one desired to be on the short end of the deal. They paid 4 denars for a Polish half-grosh, so this same exchange rate was used for the inferior half-grosh coming from the Svidnica mint. So it is entirely possible that the Lithuanian half-denar (obolas) was issued for the specific purpose of aiding the public to handle these half-grosches, and at the first opportunity to pick them out of circulation.

After striking some more half-denars, in 1546 Sigismund Augustus began stern measures to eliminate the Svidnica coins from circulation. For that purpose, special offices were opened in Vilnius, Kaunas, Šiauliai, Gardinas, Brasta, Vladimir, Lodz, Vitebsk, Mogilev, Pansk, and elsewhere, through which in the course of a year millions of the debased half-grosches were collected in the treasury. Part of them (about 3 1/2 million) were turned over to the Vilnius mint and there were restruck into new coins. The major part (about 6 million) were taken over by banks and Jews.

The fate of the remaining half-grosches is unknown. To begin the exchange in 1546, three and a half denars were offered for the Svidnica half-grosh to the holder. Later, when their immense numbers were realized, three denars sufficed.

After 1547, half-denars were no longer struck in Lithuania. We will discuss the denar of approximately the same real value of Stephan Batory in another place.

half-denar of Sigismund Augustus with the year "1554" found somewhere in Poland is not genuine. It is either altered, or in preparing the die at the mint an error crept in---the last two figures were switched. Similar errors happened in those days.

* * *

The Denar-- (0.1 of a Grašis)

We have noted that the half-grašis of Sigismund Augustus came into being without the insignia of Poland. On the denar it returned again to its old position. We do not believe that the ruler desired this. On many of his Lithuanian coins this "guest" is missing. It seems that here, precedents were followed---it was so on Alexander's denar; such a denar already existed and passed in circulation. But it is strange that Polish numismatists illustrating their volumes, should place the Polish eagle in the preferred position. True, for want of any inscription, they could have "erred," but to us it is clear without any doubt that this "mute" coin is the Lithuanian Grand Duchy's, so the Lithuanian ensign must appear on the obverse side. In this sense, we are correcting the "errors" of foreign students.

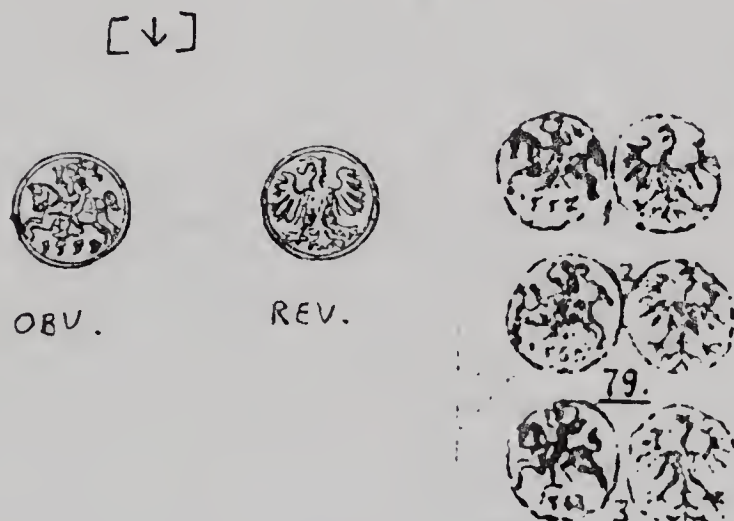


Figure 79. Sigismund Augustus' Denars.

Beginning in 1545, denars were struck in Vilnius until 1560. So also it seems, they may have occurred later, since there is a denar dated 1563. The dateless denars of Sigismund Augustus are generally allocated to the very beginning of the issue. All of the singlely weighed as much as the half denars, but their silver content was twice as much. Ten denars made up a Lithuanian grašis, as it was earlier. There was a large number of these coins produced in the Vilnius mint. No other coin of Sigismund Augustus was so plentifully distributed. Old records show for the seven and a half months the mint operated (October 14, 1545, to May 29, 1546), 391,339 denars were struck. Records failed for some time afterward, but when they again appeared, they showed the following production of denars: in 1550--102,609; 1551--256,200; 1552--923,179; 1553--1,188,646; 1554--3,217,526. During the period the Jewish leasees operated, the Vilnius mint was no less active. So, although specific figures are unavailable, through these seven years, coins in the 'teens of millions could have been struck.

* * *

The 2-Denar Coin (Two-denar)

Based upon available sources, we can state that these coins were struck in Vilnius between 1550 and 1570; it is possible there were interruptions, there are no statistics. They were necessary as intervenors between the Lithuanian denars and the Polish half-groshes. Our own half-grašis was exchanged for two half-denars, while the denar was exchanged into 2 Polish half-denars.

[↓]

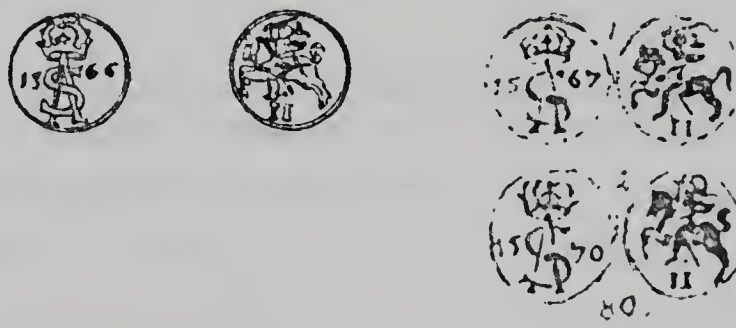


Figure 80. Sigismund Augustus' 2 denar coins.

Two-denar coins separately weighed about 0.635 gr., and their silver

content was 0.220. An accurate weight and doubling the silver content in the 2-denars greatly eased acceptance of the latter in circulation. To the Lithuanians, it was one of their own, since we have noted in the illustration, there was no foreign insignia. [i.e., Polish eagle] Below the Vytis, the Roman numeral "II" displayed the denomination (2 denars).

In the course of time, the 2-denar coin was designated "dvylekis" in the Lithuanian vernacular. Later, a similar designation was given to Sigismund Vasa's and John Kasimirus's grašis and a half coins--the "paltarokas."

The Half-Grašis

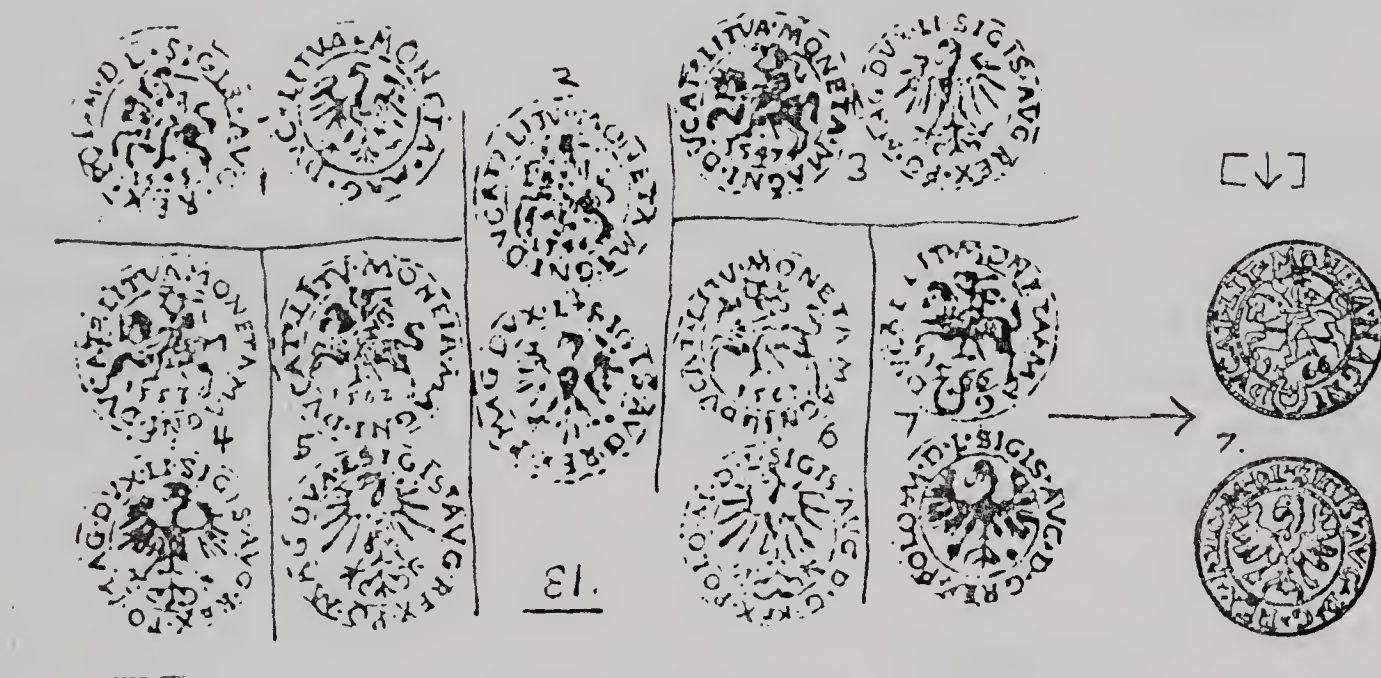
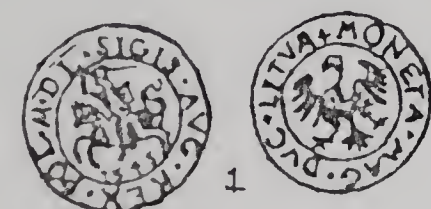


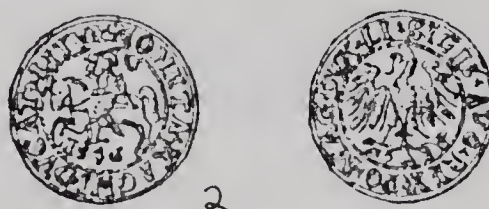
Figure 81. Sigismund Augustus' half-grašis coins (1 to 6, minted at Vilnius; the 7th, from the Tikocine mint).

Traditionally, the half-grašis coin continued to dominate the currency of the Grand Duchy. The half-grašis of Sigismund Augustus was struck in Vilnius from 1545 to 1565, and in 1566 in Tikocine (these latter were marked below the date with a visible symbol of the head of the Tikocine mint, Myškovski, see Figure 81/7). Half-grašiai

[↓]



ORIGINAL LEGEND



Legend switched

without the date come from the start of activity at the Vilnius mint. All of these remained, just about the same as they were in the era of Alexander and Sigismundus the Old. As a matter of fact, using an average, we find that the new half-grašis weighed about 1.260 gr., and was struck with a silver content of 0.345. Remaining accounts of those years show that Sigismund Augustus issued into circulation many half-grašiai. For example, in 1550, 1,955,116 were struck. The following year, 832,243. In 1552--over a half million. About the period 1562-3, their yearly production again began to mount, as seen by the increase in die changes, while the number struck in Lithuania was substantially increased by the 1566 Tikocine half-grašis. We do not have complete statistics. The noticeable decrease in production at the Vilnius mint resulted from the accelerated striking of denars and coins of other denominations in the same year. Silver had to be conserved for all, as well as the available means of production.

As we see here, the Polish eagle is again placed next to the Knight. To start with, the ruler's name and titles appear on the Knight's side, while the inscription, detailing the coin's ties to its country of origin, was etched around the Polish insignia. Later, we note that someone must have observed the "error" and the inscriptions were exchanged. But we must correct the error (without quotes) by calling the obverse of such half-grašis that side which portrays the Vytis and which declared by inscription that this coin belongs to the Grand Duchy of Lithuania (Moneta Magni Ducat. Lithuaniae.).

The 3-leaf, which appeared on Sigismund the Elder's grašis now seems to have become the mark of the Vilnius mint itself. It begins to segregate certain coins worked on in other mints. It is repeated upon the half-grašis coins of Sigismund Augustus. The other marks are varied: circles, stars, gussets, dots, crosses, etc. The mark of G. Tarla---"topor" (we would say--a hatchet) indicates that about 1562-65, and perhaps a bit earlier, that marshal of the manor was the head of the Vilnius mint. The personal insignia of the heads, and of other responsible officials of the mint, are squeezed mostly between inscriptions (for instance, Tarla--see Figure 81/6, after the word "Magni")¹⁹ The date of striking (year)

¹⁹Tarla was the first to initiate the custom of marking the coins of Lithuania with the symbol of the highest official of the mint. Later, that custom spread and took in lower officials (minters, engravers, leasees). We will not take time here to give a further explanation of these symbols. We will touch upon them only as much as is absolutely necessary.

we find in various places upon these and other coins. For some, below the Vytis. For others, at the portrait of the ruler, or next to the monogram.

The Grašis coin

On this basic coin of the Grand Duchy, during the reign of Sigismund Augustus, the Polish insignia did not appear. It was replaced by the crowned bust of the ruler, around which was inscribed Sigismund's name and titles. A startling innovation: for the first time the ruler's portrait appeared on Lithuania's coins.



FIGURE 82. Grašiai Struck with purely Lithuanian Themes (#4, produced in Tikocine).

As we see in the illustration, the reverse side is graced by yet another Lithuanian mark--the Columns of Gediminas. Only on the Lithuanian grašiai struck at Tikocine were the Columns replaced by that mint's mark (see Figure 82/4). The legend remains the same (Moneta Magni Ducatus Lithuaniae.).

We would err if we presumed that by omitting the Polish insignia from Lithuanian coins, this descendant of Jogaila nodded reverently to the land of his forefathers. No, no! The surges of life carried him towards the Polish bog with a stronger pull than any other holder of the joint throne after Jogaila. And he became mired in it. But he had a



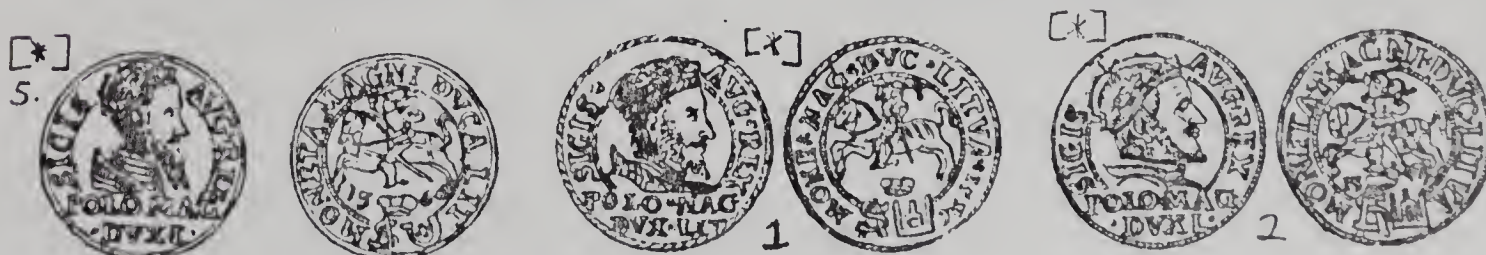
desire to place his portrait upon the coin---and it was inconceivable to omit the Vytis from Lithuanian money. Willingly or not, the eagle had to be sacrificed. And the Columns of Gediminas addition emphasized nothing else but this, that Vilnius, the heart of all Lithuania, belongs without reservation, to the coin's issuer. It was with this same motive that later Grand Dukes utilized the mark of Gediminas among their other symbols, even those entirely unrelated to Gediminas (Example, the German August of Saxony).

So, although Sigismund's grašis superficially appeared to be thoroughly Lithuanian, delving deeply into the motives for that appearance, we can hardly appreciate that ruler's sentiments toward declining Lithuanian. Where only personal interests, private ambition reigns....

Sigismund Augustus's grašiai with Lithuanian themes were struck in Vilnius on two occasions: 1545-46, and 1555-59. (we believe there was an interruption in 1558). In addition, in 1566 at Tikocine. The very first came from under the hammer closely resembling Sigismund the Elder's grašis, later, the Jewish leasees of the mint (and of course, at Tikocine) debased them somewhat. Following a general average, 1 grašis weighed about 2.525 gr., with pure silver of 0.870 gr. in it.



[FIGURE 83. The "Equalized" Polish-Lithuanian 1 Grašis coins produced in the period 1546-48, and 1566-68. No. 5 was produced in Tikocine. Those "equalized" coins bear the monogram of Sigismund on the bottom of the reverse next to the Columns. Those purely of Lithuanian value are those on page 270, figure 82; these have just the Columns on the bottom, and on the obverse the text is around the perimeter, and not horizontal under the bust,]



relative to the current Polish grosh, the Lithuanian variety was still about 20% more valuable. How many of these grašis coins were issued from the mint in total, we have no information. During the first seven and a half months period of the mint's activity, as appears from the remaining accounts, there were struck 6,254 kapos (three score) and 23 grašiai. In recoveries we have located only about 15 die changes, which shows that during the initial period of the starting year, production of these coins went slowly. During the second period (1555-59) and those struck at Tikocine of the same type of grašis, we have found just a few changes of dies. We then guess that there were issued only comparatively few of the coins in question.

The following fact strongly supports such a guess: other than those grašis coins of 1545-46, and even later in 1555-59, there were struck in the Vilnius mint grašis coins of a different real worth, these linked to the Polish groshes, and are inferior to the former Lithuanian type. They weighed on an average about 2.060 gr., with only .740 gr. of silver content in them. [These were struck 1546-48, and 1566-68.]

These grašiai differed from those earlier described of Sigismund Augustus, not only in their physical measurements, but also in appearance. The inscriptions on the obverse side were set out differently. On the reverse, next to the Columns of Gediminas, the monogram of the ruler appeared. Above the monogram and the Columns, the Grand Duchy's crown was placed. Finally, to satisfy the old requirements of the Poles to equalize the coins of both countries, Sigismund Augustus complied at least with the 1 grašis coin. Nudged and floundering around, leaderless, the Lithuanian nation was pushed another step towards Cracow's spiderweb.

* * *

In addition to Vilnius, the "Polish-Lithuanian" grašis of 1566 were also struck in Tikocine. On this mint's production of grašiai, the Columns of Gediminas were replaced by the insignia of it's head, Myškovski (Figure 83/5). Since Polish groshes struck at the same time and in the same place weighed about 2.000 gr. each, with a silver content of 0.680 gr., according to Polish authorities, then even the Lithuanian grašis produced in the same mint could not have differed. We thus see that Sigismund Augustus was embarked upon a campaign of "saving" silver. The result: the better grašiai soon disappeared from circulation, while the inferior value grašiai had to be bolstered by proclamation. Ill and suffering from age upon his deathbed, Sigismund Augustus sadly reviewed what was happening to his coins. In his last year he commanded, threatening punishment, that these grašis coins should be valued both in Poland and Lithuania,

following the old order, "according to the price of the Polish grosh.", that is, at 5 for 4 Lithuanian grašiai of Vilnius.

We have no accurate statistics on the total Lithuanian coins struck (half-grašis, and grašis). According to figures submitted by Polish authors, there was used about 24,000 "grzywny" of pure silver. But the silver was consumed in great part to produce Polish coins, so the portion allotted Lithuanians cannot be estimated. We concede that the Polish head, Myškovski struck more Polish coins there, and only produced as many Lithuanian grašis coins as he felt would suffice for one more experiment in equalizing Polish and Lithuanian money. Apparently, he shrewdly left no statistics.

* * *

The Two Grašis

In 1565 there came out of the Vilnius mint the new coin of Sigismundus Augustus with the accustomed inscription. The reverse side's center is completely new: under the Grand Duke's crown (mitre) a shield is placed with national insignia--on the heraldic right is The Knight [Vytis]; on the left, the Columns of Gediminas. Under these two signs can be seen the figure "II," representing the 2-grašis coin denomination. The field and spaces between words are decorated with the three leaf.

It is estimated that not many 2-grašis coins were struck---we know of only a few die changes. They were not really necessary or useful in Lithuania. It was easy to do business in grašis and half-grašis. The greatest need for the 2 grašis was to facilitate the exchange of Polish and Lithuanian money, since neither the one nor the other could be equalized basically. True, the referred to 2-grašis piece was no longer worth 2 of the earlier Lithuanian grašis coins, but even so they equalled 5 Polish half-groshes (debasing the coinage always progressed faster in Poland than it did in the Grand Duchy of Lithuania.).

* * *

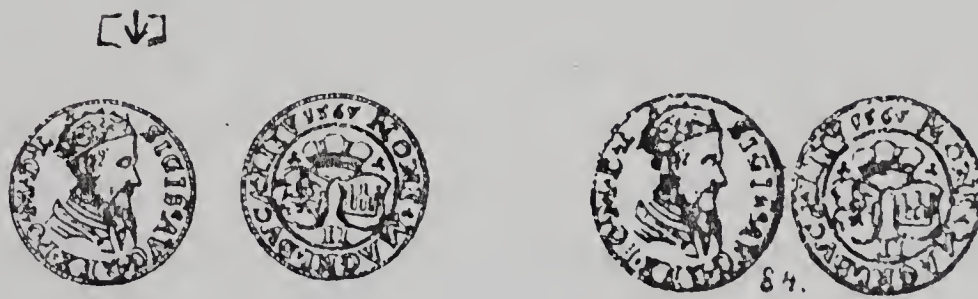


FIGURE 84. The 2-Grašis of 1565.

The Three Grašiai Piece

Among all Sigismund Augustus' silver coins, the three-grašiai piece had the most types. They were struck in three series: a) 2.670 gr.; b) 3 gr. in weight---both similarly of 0.875 silver content; and c) about 7 gr. in weight, but more than a half lesser silver content: 0.345. Other than 3-grašiai, Lithuanians called these coins "patreiniai," while the heaviest 3 grašiai were termed "didka" (along the Prussian border) which became "ditke" (See Figure 85/6).

The lightest 3-grašiai are known to be from 1546-47 and 1556 (this has a somewhat larger diameter). Not many were issued, since we find barely 1 to 3 issue changes yearly. The medium-weight 3-grašiai were struck more plentifully. They are known in issues of 1562-66, and in 1562 survivals we recognize nearly 15 die changes. And that year saw just the beginning of the production of these coins--later, the Vilnius mint could have speeded up its activity even more. Of the heaviest 3-grašiai (didka) up until the present, the 1562 emission is the only one clearly identified.

The first 3-grašiai (Example #1) were issued with a transverse inscription on the reverse: "III GROSS AR TRIPL MAG DUCA LITVA" "grossus argenteus triplex Magni Ducatus Lituania," which translates, "A triple silver grašis of the Grand Duchy of Lithuania". The Knight (Vytis) is displaced to an insignificant spot below the inscription. The market value of the triple grašis about equalled three Polish groshes. There were no complaints from Poland concerning this coin.



Figure 85. Triple Grašis. The 3-grašis coin. Numbered by types:
1 & 2: a. 3-5, b. 6, c. (A triple grašis with an unusual inscription, see figure 86.)

Suddenly in 1562, the appearance of the Lithuanian 3-grašis changed: in place of the ruler's bust, his names' monogram (SA) crowned, while the 4-line inscription "III GROSS..." was replaced by the Lithuanian Knight, occupying the entire field. Finally, the very weight of the 3-grašis jumped up outdistancing the 3 grosh of Poland in theoretical value.

Such a change in the coins of the Grand Duchy of Lithuania raised an entire maelstrom of dissatisfaction in the royal palace of Sigismund Augustus in Cracow. The Poles began to protest violently that the Lithuanian 3-grašis broke with tradition and did not conform with ancient statutes, left by Sigismundus the Old... True, by the regulation of 1528, he had initiated and established in Poland the 3-grosh with transverse inscriptions

and with currently operating methods, but the regulation was not applicable to Lithuania. However, for the Poles, bent upon their peculiar ends, it became an excuse to clamor and quarrel. They attacked this Lithuanian coin naturally, and at the same time blamed G. Tarla, the head of the coin mint in Vilnius, fundamentally not for this or that change in the 3-grašis piece, but most surely for displaying in such a dominating position the Lithuanian patriotic symbol, the Vytis (Knight), which Tarla, toadying to the Lithuanians at Vilnius, had exhibited on the coin with all stateliness. "A new attempt at separatism!..."

We will never know who was the initiator of this matter in Lithuania or who perpetuated this taunting of the Poles. The very fact however, draws our attention to the situation that some men of eminence in the Grand Duchy still felt the onus of subjugation, and still continued to fight for Lithuania's autonomy. Sigismund Augustus himself surely did not participate in this "conspiracy." That is especially emphasized by the following fact: seemingly in reply to the Poles tendentious grumbling, there was issued from the Vilnius mint in 1565 another new 3-grašis, again with a transverse four line inscription, but located not in place of the Knight, but instead ^{above} the ruler's monogram, where at the start there had been an even more important item---the head of Sigismund Augustus... Even worse, the Vytis was carried to the obverse side of the coin (o, horribile dictu!) and so was raised even higher and honored. And even this is not all. In place of the routine legend, describing the nominal value of the coin, and to which state it pertained, there was spread across the 3-Grašis from edge to edge, in mockery of the aggressors (Poles) that biting sentence from the II Psalm of David: "QUI HABITAT IN COELIS IRRIDEBIT EOS:" [*] "He who lives in heaven will laugh at them...").

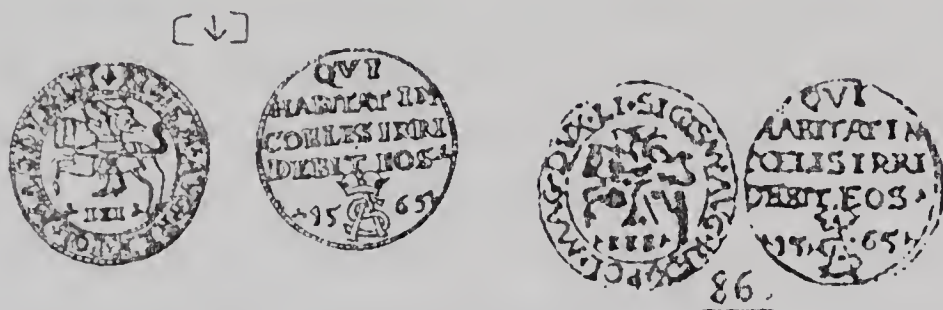


Figure 86. The bizarre 3-grašis is which caused the greatest storm of protest and indignation in Poland.

[*] Psalm 2:4 (NAS): "He who sits in the heavens laughs,
The Lord scoffs at them."

So, the leadership of the mint and eminent Lithuanians standing in back of it, in Vilnius, on at least one occasion gave the Poles what was coming to them. The Poles, full of outrage, descended upon Sigismund Augustus, who in this case was least at fault. When these 3-grašis coins appeared in Polish provinces, the storm boiled over. The bishop of Cracow F. Krasinski supported the indignation of the Polish boyars, and sent a special letter addressed to Sigismundus Augustus. Having received that letter, the ruler personally investigated the "case," and in the beginning of 1566, totally banned further striking of that coin.

[The discussed coin which bears the date of 1566 is very rare, while the one bearing the date of 1565, while still extremely scarce, is more plentiful than the 1566 one. Collectors should beware of punched holes in these coins. These holes were not "fole holes" as some have reported, punched by an infuriated Polish nationalist; but rather these holes were for the money changers to string them to their belts by a wire chain. These particular Lithuanian coins were saved and not melted in later years, due to their strange political inscription.]

The 4-Grašiy coin

The 4-grašiy silver coin of Sigismundus Augustus is known in the years 1565 to 1569. They were the only 4 grašiy Lithuanian coins in history. For one such coin, the exchange was four Lithuanian grašiai or five Polish groshes. In the people's vernacular, these coins soon acquired the name--"ketvirtokai" (though elsewhere they were called ketvertokai or ketvergem). To the Poles, they were "czworaki."



Figure 87. Examples of Sigismund Augustus' 4-Grašiy coins.

The 4 grašiy coins were struck of 0.875 silver content, and each weighed about 1.5 gr. However, a considerable portion were issued quite debased---the officials at the mint were not averse to profit corruptly, as can be noted clearly in almost all coins of that era. It should be understood that we were not guided by single specimens of all findings, so in this, as in all instances, we have used as a basis either legal weights or the composition of the metal, or finally, of the average finds examined. We are always confronted with this characteristic phenomenon: coins first issued came out from the mint with no major complaint of their weight or content, and only later did the pilfering of the metal happen. Government officials lacked the ability to organize fitting control, and there was none, so the Jews who swarmed around the mint, the foreign masters, and the all powerful local boyars, were unable to withstand the temptation of easy money.

The "Ketvirtokai" were struck quite plentifully, which is borne out by the several changes of dies yearly. One 1568 "ketvirtokas" revealed a specially elegant appearance for the time (Figure 87/3). In the 19th century, some experts believe that it was just a trial piece and never in circulation. When several other specimens turned up in the excavations, that opinion fell. Now, no one doubts that this 4 grašiy piece was produced for circulation, and spread far and wide.

We can see both sides of the 4 grašiy piece, the illustrations and inscriptions, so we will not describe them here.²⁰ Just a few words concerning the figures: below the night and the Columns of Gediminas we see "IIII," which means four, though we now write the figure in Roman as "IV." Though the word "grašiy" is not mentioned in the inscription, the figure "IIII" shows that the said coin has a value of 4 grašiy.

As an elegant, heavy and high silver content coin, the "ketvirtokai" soon found their way far beyond Lithuania's boundaries. Money speculators collected these coins in Germany. They reached Italy, even Holland. Probably because of Sigismund Augustus' long beard, they were known abroad as

²⁰ A detailed description of each coin would weary the reader. We describe only the items less clear. Numismatists will find what they seek in the illustrations. This applies to all of this era's Grand Duchy coins, of which the more characteristic are pictured here from the originals. We mention once more, that after reading the description of any coin, it is useful to glance at the weight and silver content panel (Page 362.).

"little beards." They were even imitated in foreign countries. Ciešin's (of Silesia) King Vaclovas III in 1572 (and probably even in 1574) struck his 4 groshes on their model, and the Graf. A.M. Tizzone of Piedmont (in Italy) at the beginning of the 17th century struck his 1/8 "scudo." In time, a large majority of Lithuanian "ketvirtokai" found their way abroad and remained there.

The Šeštokas--The 6-Grašių Coins.

There were two separate types of these coins struck in Vilnius in the reign of Sigismundus Augustus. The first appeared in 1547. It weighed about 5.350 gr., and included 4.660 gr. of silver. It corresponded to Poland's coins, since the mixture of silver content was about equal to 6 Polish groshes. The Šeštokas figure "VI" was struck variously. "V" was placed on one side of the Knight, the "I" on the other. It is not known what the influence was, but the Vilnius mint issued only a comparative few of these coins. To the present, there have been found only a few originals. We have many more fabricated, which found their way into well-regarded collections. It is difficult to establish when any particular counterfeit appeared.



Figure 88. The 6-Grašių coins of Sigismund Augustus. 1. The Earliest (coordinated with Polish coins). 2) The large 6-grašių (struck conforming to the basis of Lithuanian coins).

Some of them can be attributed to the period of the "Šeštokas" original circulation; others, in the 19th century. About the middle of that century, coin collecting became an "important hobby." Wealthy collectors paid for discoveries without stint. All this encouraged swindlers to act. One of the most widely known "providers" of counterfeit coins was a medalist at the Warsaw Coin mint, J. Mainertas, who supplied the coin market with many falsified coins--not only the "Šeštokas" but many others. In addition to him, many other smaller calibre crooks profited by this "trade." The fifth volume of Hutton-Czapski's coins vividly shows how widespread was the counterfeiting of Poland and Lithuania's coins. Certain falsifications are difficult to distinguish from the genuine coin. And since the silver content follows the original, it takes an expert to orient himself in such a jumble. All the forgers' efforts seem to have paid off well.

In 1562 there appeared still another 6-grašiy piece from the Vilnius mint. It was quite a lot thicker than the previous examples, but of a much lower silver content: it weighed nearly 15 gr., including in that about 5.140 precious metal. These were legal weights which as was the custom, were lowered somewhat as the coins were struck. From among roughly ten known die changes, there were found 6 grašiy coins weighing 14.200 to 14.150 grams. Based upon the pure silver content, the 1562 6 grašiy corresponded to 6 Lithuanian grašiy, so was produced in accordance with regulations governing Lithuanian money. Distinguishing them from the earlier coins, people termed them the LARGE 6 grasiy (See Figure 88/2).

Notwithstanding that the Vilnius mint struck numerous 6 grašiy, today they are considered rare by numismatists. It was a common occurrence: the more valuable coins always were saved quicker, and appreciated more. We must assume that a great number of them, as was usual, were melted down into metal bars and profitably sold again to coin mints, which always gladly bought silver. Such practices were and are still known.

* * *

Half-talers and talers

In 1564-65, there were struck in Vilnius a small number of Sigismund Augustus' half-talers of 15 grašiy, and talers, of 30 grašiy nominal value. On examining these coins in the 19th century, a large number of counterfeits were discovered. K. Strončinski had reached the conclusion that authentic half-talers and talers dated 1564 could alone be considered genuine, while in 1565 they were not struck at the mint at all, therefore, they were counterfeited. However, we found undoubted premises to side with the famous student of Lithuania's historical coins, J. Tiškevičius's belief, that both of the coins under discussion were struck in both years. But half-talers of 1546 are illegal and so are talers of 1547, which were spread by the well-known crook Mainertas (of course, he could also have produced legal talers. [The dates on these counterfeits are incorrectly ingraved]

Genuine Lithuanian half-talers at the start weighed about 13.930 gr., with the talers weighing 27.860 gr. Some other known specimens, apparently of somewhat later date, weigh less. The talers particularly grew lighter very quickly. I have handled a taler weighing 27.320 gr., and the specimen held in the American Numismatic Society's museum, dated 1564, weighs only 26.300 gr.

According to the silver content, neither the half-taler nor the taler corresponded to the standard of Lithuania's or Poland's money. If the Lithuanian grašis, according to tradition, contained about 0.870 gr. of precious metal, then 15 or 30 grašiy must, to agree with the basis, contain about 13 and 26 grams. However, students have found only about 10.240 gr. in a half-taler, while in a taler--about 20.470 grams of silver in the mixture. On the other hand, the Polish Grosh normally contained 0.770 gr. of silver, so our half-taler (if we were to agree with the standard of Polish money) should have had 11.500 and 23 gr. of precious metal in the coin's structure. That is, these large and some of the most beautiful of the Grand Duchy's output, were really debased in their real value.

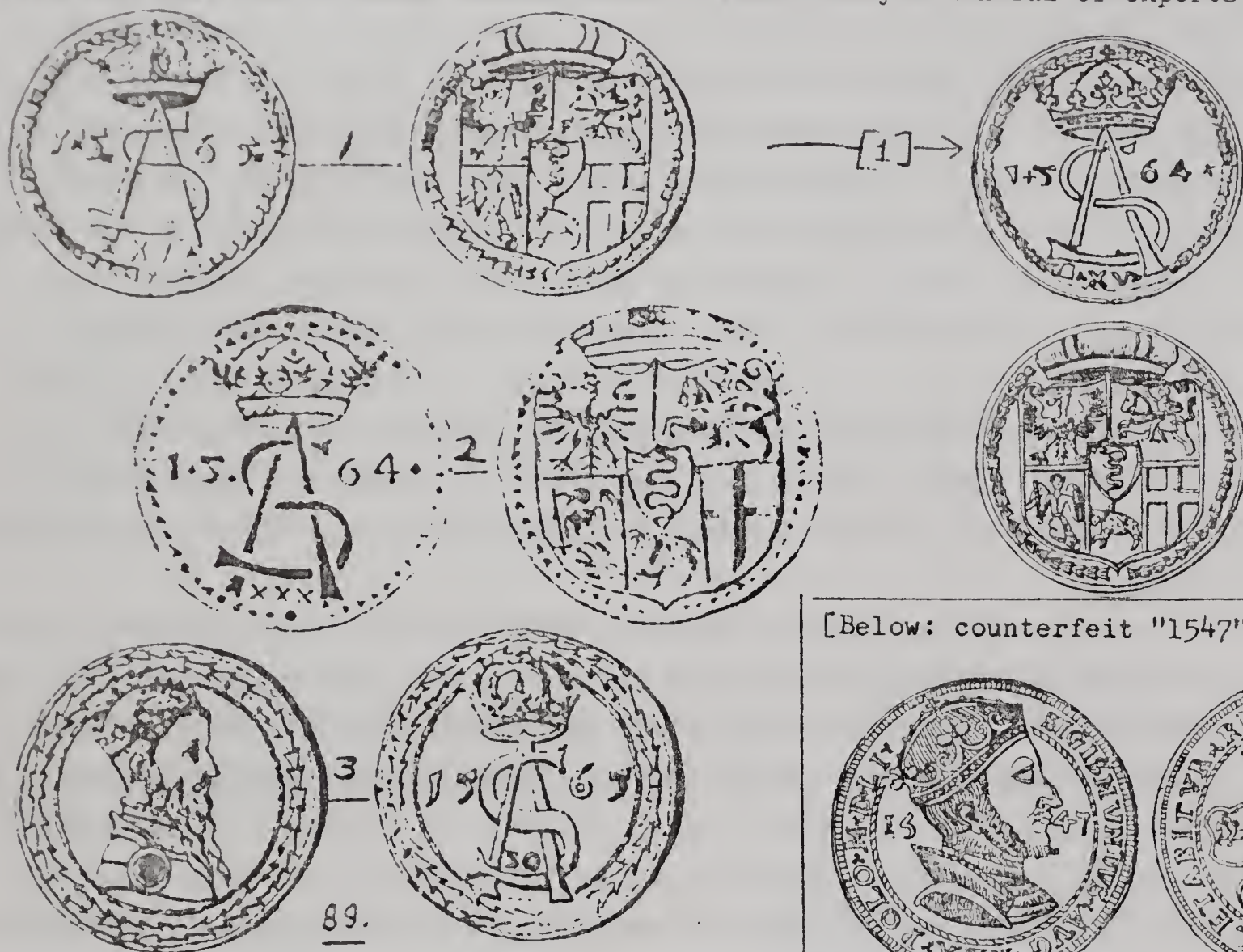
What has happened here? We have attempted here in various ways to guess the reason for such debasement. In reality, the reason could have been the most ordinary one: follow the rule, that all the weightier coins were quickly snatched from circulation. A similar fate awaited the half-talers and talers. By lessening the real value of these coins, it was hoped to keep them in circulation longer. And of course, to save on silver. Who would have ever let that consideration out of mind in those days of general debasement of currency?

[Counterfeit 1/2 taler 1546 below]

[Counterfeit 1/2 taler 1564 below]



It is hard to believe that even debasing the half-talers and talers below the standard of the grašis would not cause people to turn away from them. The large, bright and beautiful coins naturally found their way to the bottom of pocketbooks, while any question of their content would interest only a handful of experts.



[Below: counterfeit "1547" taler]



FIGURE 89. The Vilnius Half-talers (1) and TALERS (2-3) of Sigismund Augustus.

[2]

[3]

[Below: counterfeit 1564 taler]

